

MANCHUS IN MANCHUKUO

AS A CONCEPTUAL PROBLEM

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MASTER'S THESIS

JULY 2014

THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI, FACULTY OF ARTS

THE DEPARTMENT OF WORLD CULTURES

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1. Introduction

I would suggest that you better choose another topic.

Li Narangoa, 2013

The purpose of this paper is to discuss Manchus especially in the context of Manchukuo. Manchukuo was a state that existed from 1932 to 1945 and encompassed the eastern parts of Inner Mongolia and the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning in today's People's Republic of China (PRC). While Manchukuo defines this political realm, the term Manchuria has been used from the 17th century onwards to describe the geographical area in question. Manchuria can be roughly defined as the area between Korea, China proper, Mongolia and Siberia¹. Today, Chinese favour the term Dongsansheng (东三省, Three Eastern Provinces) or Dongbei (东北, Northeast) instead of Manchuria, but the term Manchuria is still widely used in Western research. Manchukuo (also rendered Manchoukuo or Manzhouguo) was founded with the strong involvement of the Japanese; therefore it is often designated as the "Puppet state of Japan" (in Chinese Weimanguo 伪满国, "fake Manchu land"). Manchus originated from Southern Manchuria and were the ruling class of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). Today, Manchus are the third largest ethnic group in the People's Republic of China with a population of about 10,3 million. However, Manchus after the Qing Dynasty and especially during the Manchukuo period have been researched little. This Master's Thesis aims to explore this topic that rightly deserves more attention.

During the research period I had the chance to work in the premises of Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) in Copenhagen. Defining an exact research question was extremely challenging – how to research a matter that is merely mentioned fleetingly here and there? Researching Manchus in Manchukuo is equal to chasing ghosts, things to whose existence many do not even believe in. Manchus were certainly not the most visible group of people in Manchukuo, or as reverend and missionary John Stewart pointed out in 1944; "...the population, which the Government claims to be about forty million, is still overwhelmingly Chinese. Manchus are rather scarce; they are not very

¹ Janhunen, 1996, p. 3.

easy to find when one wants them”². Han Chinese did constitute the majority of the population in Manchukuo, but Manchus were certainly not extinct. Nevertheless, whereas Japanese³, Mongols⁴, Han Chinese⁵ and to some extent Koreans⁶ in Manchukuo have gathered academical interest, especially non-elite Manchus have, to a large extent, sunk into the depths of history. They did not leave many literary sources behind, and most of all, today they do not have their own nation state to conduct historical research from their point of view. During my time in Copenhagen, I had the honor to be in contact with a renowned researcher on Manchukuo, Li Narangoa, about the loss of viewpoint in my research. Her advice was blunt and certainly the answer of an experienced Manchukuo researcher: “I would suggest that you better choose another topic.”

However, I did not yield that easily. Manchukuo is an intriguing and complex topic of study. I became fascinated with it already in my Bachelor’s Thesis, which discussed the diplomatic relationship between Finland and Manchukuo; during the Second World War (WWII) Finland was allied with Germany and Japan, a situation that made it quite necessary for Finland to recognize Manchukuo and tie diplomatic relations with it. Other justifications included the potential economical benefits and the belief that Finns and Manchus were kindred peoples united by distant ancestors. However, in practice diplomatic relations between Finland and Manchukuo amounted to nil due to precarious conditions during WWII.⁷ The Professor of East-Asian Studies in the University of Helsinki, Juha Janhunen, further suggested that I focus on Manchus in Manchukuo.

In the end, the problem of the research question was solved by engineering a bipartite nature for the thesis. The first aim is to reason why the original hypothesis was wrong. The original hypothesis stated that Manchus in Manchukuo enjoyed a privileged status. After all, post-Qing Manchuria under the leadership of Zhang Zuolin and his son Zhang Xueliang enjoyed a relative stability that was unknown in the chaotic China Proper. It

² Stewart, 1944, p. 68.

³ see e.g. numerous publications from Mariko Asano Tamanoi.

⁴ see e.g. numerous publications from Owen Lattimore, Nakami Tatsuo, “Mongol nationalism and Japan”, 2003.

⁵ see e.g. Thomas Gottschang & Diana Lary, *Swallows and settlers: the great migration from North China to Manchuria*, 2000.

⁶ see e.g. Suk-Jung Han, “From Pusan to Fengtian: the borderline between Korea and Manchukuo in the 1930’s”, 2005.

⁷ Mursu, 2011.

was in the interest of many local factions to preserve this situation by maintaining Manchuria's separateness from the China Proper. For example Mongols saw great promise in Manchukuo.⁸ Furthermore, Manchukuo bore the name of Manchus, the nominal head of the state was a Manchu, and Manchus had great importance in Manchukuo's state ideologies. To certain extent the original hypothesis is quite true – the conditions of Manchus in China Proper were quite undignified during the time of the Republic of China in comparison to Manchus in Manchukuo. However, after collecting data on the matter, it seems that majority of Manchus in Manchukuo were impoverished, unemployed or poorly paid if employed, and had only limited access to education especially in Manchu language. Furthermore, the Government of Manchukuo is known to have had only one Manchu minister during its existence. Summa summarum, there seems to be no evidence of unified Manchu alliance that stood behind Manchukuo. It rather appears that Manchukuo was mainly a project engineered by the Japanese who wanted a base from which to attack China Proper, local Manchurian power holders (most of whom were Han Chinese) who wanted to develop Manchuria as an individual entity, and Qing-loyalists (some of whom were Manchus) who wanted to redeem the Qing Dynasty through Manchukuo – three very contradictory agendas of which the first mentioned prevailed.

Secondly, this master's thesis attends to the question of why Manchus, especially after the Qing Dynasty, are considered such a problematic topic of study. There are many quite obvious practical, political and ideological reasons that have withheld researchers from taking this topic under inspection. In this study, however, it is suggested that there exists one even more elementary reason for the problematic nature of Manchu studies – the conceptual problem of Manchus. Various concepts have been used to describe Manchus, such as an ethnic group, ethnicity, race, nationality, minority and so on, but these concepts are oftentimes vague and too inexact. As Pamela Kyle Crossley pointed out in her article *Thinking about ethnicity in early modern China* (1990), the concept of ethnicity is in its elasticity both welcome and regretted; however, it is usually implicitly assumed that ethnicity has existed in a form or another in a significant manner in China.⁹ Crossley's view is that Manchus were not an ethnicity in the beginning, but later

⁸ Jones, 1949, p. 8-9, 55-81.

⁹ Crossley, 1990a, p. 1-2.

were¹⁰. S. M. Shirokogoroff, on the other hand, maintained that Manchus were an indigenous ethnicity in some places, while in some places they ceased to be so¹¹. Defining Manchus is one of the major challenges in research on Manchu history. Likewise this Master's Thesis endeavours to analyze the conceptual problem that surrounds Manchus and bring forward criticism on notions that are oftentimes taken for granted.

Earlier research: Manchukuo. In Western English research Manchukuo has, for a long time, been mainly and merely regarded as a subtopic in Japan and China's relationship, or a phase in Japan's expansion politics before and during WWII. Manchukuo has been nominated a puppet state and, it seems, therefore disregarded as a worthwhile area of study.¹² As Suk Jung-Han conveyed it, "When scholars persist in seeing this entity as simply a puppet, the multifaceted character of its fourteen-year history is obscured and Manchukuo's potential as a model remains submerged."¹³ However, the situation has improved during the last decade as more critical attention has been concentrated on Manchukuo as an individual entity. One of the most important works on this area is Duara Prasenjit's *Sovereignty and authenticity* (2004) that in step with Suk-Jung Han's statement challenges the concept of Manchukuo merely as a puppet state, and emphasizes it as an exemplary of state construction¹⁴. Unfortunately, majority of research published on Manchukuo during the last decade persists on concentrating on questions of foreign policy. Still very little is known about the actual domestic situation of Manchukuo. Some exceptions to this rule, however, have emerged, for example Norman Smith's *Intoxicating Manchuria: alcohol, opium, and culture in China's Northeast* (2013).

In this paper, Chinese research on Manchukuo has been mainly disregarded. Firstly, the vast amount of sources must be narrowed down one way or another. Secondly, the majority of Chinese research on Manchukuo is poor in actual information, very emotionally charged, and of appalling quality when it comes to basic requirements of research. Hardly any Chinese scholar has tried to invent an innovative point of view on

¹⁰ Crossley, 1990a & 1997.

¹¹ Shirokogoroff, 1924.

¹² Shao, 2011, p. 6.

¹³ Han, 2004, p. 457.

¹⁴ Duara, 2004.

the topic, a fact that many researchers on Manchukuo have pointed out. Instead, the same story of the evil history of Weimanguo is repeated with very similar phrases. The very same sentences also recur on the information boards in the monuments that have been commemorated for the cause, for example the *18th of September History Museum* in Shenyang, the *Puppet Emperor's Palace* in Changchun and the *Unit 731 Museum* near Harbin. As the purpose of this study is not to research the rhetorics of propaganda, certain distance must be kept to all Chinese research. The aim is not to belittle the atrocities Japanese committed during WWII or understate the painful memory many Chinese still sustain for the sake of their forefathers, but neither should one understate the role the PRC has played in writing of history; research on Manchukuo has, unfortunately, been harnessed to a great extent to political purposes. As Shao Dan and Ronald Suleski argue, post-war taboos have prevented discussion on what Manchukuo really meant to people except in strictly nationalistic interpretations, which has resulted in gaps in research.¹⁵ Naturally it has been beneficial to emphasize the sufferings of the people and the role of Communist protesters, and deny the improvements that were made in Manchuria during the Japanese occupation. An example of such nationalistic ethos is offered by an information board in the *Museum of Occupation in Northeast* (东北沦陷史陈列馆) adjacent to the Puppet Emperor's Palace in Changchun. It reads "When the beautiful land of China was parceled up and occupied, its people were plunged into abyss of misery. Brave and indignant people at all levels took up arms spontaneously to resist the Japanese."

Japanese research on Manchukuo has been omitted for the simple reason that my Japanese skills are not competent enough. According to Rana Mitter, Japanese research on the matter is mainly divided into two factions; leftist research agrees, to a large extent, with the ethos of Chinese research. Rightist research, on the other hand, warmly reminisces about Japan's glorious past and emphasizes Japan's role in Manchukuo as a benefactor and modernizer ¹⁶. Fortunately, internationally the most prominent Japanese researchers, as have some Chinese researchers, publish their scholarly work also in English. Publications which are thus made available to larger international audiences are oftentimes more plausible than research in Japanese or especially in Chinese. This is

¹⁵ Shao & Suleski, 2005, p. 1-2.

¹⁶ Mitter, 2003, p. 146.

quite essential, as the topic of Manchukuo has, during the last decade or two, re-emerged as a controversial topic of international dispute in the scholarly world.

Earlier research: Manchus. Research on Manchus all over the world concentrates on the Qing period, whereas Manchus especially after the Qing Dynasty have been, to a large extent, ignored. In earlier Western English research on Qing-period Manchus the term “sinicization” has been applied to portray the process of rapprochement of Manchu and Han Chinese culture, the result of which has been considered the extinction of indigenous Manchu culture, and therefore Manchus have not gathered much interest.¹⁷ Shirokogoroff, who conducted field research in Aigun district by the Amur River for 18 months in 1917-1918, pointed out that instead of focusing on Manchus in Beijing and South Manchuria, which were both easily accessible areas at the time, researchers should venture to northern Manchuria where indigenous Manchu culture still existed. Unfortunately, not many heeded Shirokogoroff’s advice, and later on during the Manchukuo and early PRC period it became altogether quite impossible. Some Germans, as allies to the Japanese, managed to execute anthropological fieldwork in Manchuria during the Manchukuo period, but altogether such material on post-Qing Manchus is rather scarce. Furthermore, as Shao Dan points out, since after WWII Manchuria has been considered a territory that was recovered from foreign control and restored to China, and therefore Manchus have not enjoyed the same appeal as Tibetans or Uyghurs who have lost their autonomy¹⁸. Fortunately, since the late 1990’s this impression has been questioned, “Manchuness” has been foregrounded and the term “sinicization” has been criticized¹⁹. The scholars that support this critical view form the so-called “New Qing School” which originates mainly from USA.²⁰ Prominent researchers who belong to this movement include Pamela Kyle Crossley, Edward Rhoads and Mark Elliot, to mention but a few. This Master’s Thesis is likewise based on their tradition.

Chinese research on Manchus, albeit substantial, covers mainly the Qing period and emphasizes sinicization. Sustaining the controversy of profound sinicization on the one hand and indigenous Manchu culture on the other hand does not seem to be a

¹⁷ Shao, 2011, p. 8.

¹⁸ Shao, 2011, p. 3.

¹⁹ see e.g. Crossley, 1990b and 1990a.

²⁰ Shao, 2011, p. 8-9.

dilemma for Chinese researchers. After emphasizing the similarity of Manchus and Han Chinese, most literature proceeds to describe indigenous Manchu clothings, songs and dishes. The question remains: who actually wears these clothes, sings these songs and eats these dishes if there is no difference between Manchus and Han Chinese whatsoever. Most Chinese research on Manchus avoids more serious questions such as what has been Manchus' social status through time. This is especially true in the case of Manchukuo. The main notion is that Manchus contributed to the PRC to their utmost abilities and detested the Japanese invasion as any Han Chinese, condemning the very existence of Manchukuo²¹. This might be the case for many Manchus who stayed in China Proper, but hardly for all the Manchus in Manchukuo. As discussion on the latter group has been mainly ignored, with the exception of Puyi and other high-ranking Manchus, Chinese research on the matter is once again rendered quite useless. As Mark Elliot lamented the phenomenon, "ideologically charged nature of scholarship in the People's Republic of China and Taiwan has limited the freedom of most scholars to explore alternative to mechanical Marxist or chauvinist narratives of Manchu history."²² Portion of Chinese research on Manchus has been conducted by members of the Manchu minority, but majority of this research likewise concentrates on Manchu language and the Qing Dynasty.

In toto, research published in English on both Manchukuo and on Manchus has experienced a new wave during the last two decades. However, only few scholars have decided to combine these two topics. Majority is content with repeating that not much is known about Manchus in Manchukuo. For example Pamela Kyle Crossley's *The Manchus* (1997), which seems to be meant as a generic introduction to the topic, provides only few sentences on Manchus in Manchukuo. The most prominent exception is certainly Shao Dan's *Remote homeland, recovered borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo, and Manchuria, 1907-1985* published in 2011. In her exhaustive study she discusses the grave identity crisis Manchus suffered from one era to another. In a sense, this research paper aims to continue from where Shao Dan left off. While she concentrates on the question of who Manchus thought they were and what they thought their place in the society was, I aim to discuss how others defined and define Manchus and what place was given to them in the society.

²¹ see e.g. Guan Shanfu, 1990, p. 5.

²² Elliot, 2001, p. 31.

Sources. With the addition of few field studies done during, before or after Manchukuo in Manchuria, most prominently earlier mentioned Shirokogoroff's *Social organization of the Manchus* (1924), latest English research articles and literature compose the bulk of the secondary sources. Primary sources consist of diaries, reports and newspapers, most of which are compiled in, during or about Manchukuo. Unfortunately, the main prerequisite for outlining the source materials is availability, which results in a focus on English material. Naturally source criticism is to be applied heavily – many European adventurers, missionaries and such who travelled in Manchukuo did not speak local languages, and some shared a feeling of superiority towards Asian “races”. However, many European accounts on Manchukuo include surprisingly insightful observations, which are taken into account in this paper.

Structure of the thesis. This Master's Thesis consists of an introduction, three subsequent chapters and a conclusion. The second chapter illuminates the historical background of Manchus and Manchuria before Manchukuo. The third chapter discusses Manchus in Manchukuo, and aims to answer very practical questions such as how many Manchus actually resided in Manchukuo, what did they do for a living, what was their relationship with other groups in Manchukuo, and so on. Shortly put, the aim of the third chapter is to reason why the original hypothesis was largely faulty. In order to put things into a wider historical context, modern Manchus and their situation is discussed briefly in chapter 3.3. Finally, the fourth chapter considers the conceptual problemacy that surrounds Manchus and questions the concepts that have been traditionally used to define them.

Methods. In order to form a consistent narrative on Manchus in Manchukuo, methods of descriptive literature review and data collection are combined. Literature review is a method that has several objectives. Firstly, it aims to construct a general picture of the phenomenon. Secondly, it endeavors to describe a theory's historical development, improve existing theories, and create new ones. Literature review is an instrumental tool in cumulating information, which is one of the basic objectives in research, but it can also be used in creating new information. No satisfactory account on Manchus in Manchukuo exists beforehand; therefore, compiling the information in chapter three has been both challenging and necessary. However, if one wished to fully understand the

conditions of Manchus in Manchukuo, conducting extensive fieldwork and archival research would be essential. Interviewing local Manchus, some of who have retained indigenous Manchu customs or even Manchu language, should be done without further delay. Unfortunately, within the confines of a Master's Thesis this is simply not possible. Therefore, I ardently wish someone to take up the matter for further inspection in the near future.

Terminology. In general, Chinese names and terms are written in pinyin, except in the cases where the term is most frequently seen in some other appearance, e.g. Sun Yat-sen or the Kwantung Army, instead of Sun Zhongshan and the Guandong Army. Japanese, Korean and Manchu terms are applied in the same form as in the source material.

2. Historical background to Manchus and Manchukuo

The subject at which I was worst was Manchu; I only learnt one word in all the years I studied it. This was yili (arise), the reply I had to make when my Manchu ministers knelt before me and said a set phrase of greeting in the language.

Aisin Gioro Puyi, 1964²³

2.1. Manchus – from emperors to citizens

Manchus originate from Jurchens, a Tungusic people who sported a nomadic hunting economy. A faction of Jurchen that resided on the east slope of Changbai Mountain rose in power in the 15th century and formed the Jianzhou Federation, which extended its power across the mountains, over the Jurchens and other tribal groups.²⁴ Besides Jianzhou, two other significant Jurchen Federations during the latter Ming period were the Haixi and the Yeren Federations or tribes²⁵. In the turn of 16th and 17th centuries the Jianzhou Federation was led by Nurhaci, who was both a brilliant leader and clever diplomat. He was evidently born in 1559 in Hetu Ala, the residence of his father Taksi. Nurhaci furthered Jianzhou Federation's supremacy; he moved the capital according to his conquests, unified the various Jurchen tribes and reorganized the scattered clans under his leadership.²⁶

In 1601 Nurhaci founded a military organization known as the banners (旗, qi), which was originally based on existing clan structure but later became the basic unit of Jurchen organization. Originally the banners were an umbrella organization that oversaw the operation of Qing military forces and the adjoining groups including soldiers, officers, servants and slaves. Only a portion of bannermen were combatant. Bannermen varied from Jurchen to Mongols, frontier Chinese, Koreans and even some Russians²⁷. After the establishment of the banners, all bannermen were born into the banner affiliation of

²³ Aisin Gioro, 2010 (1989, 1964), p. 56.

²⁴ Huang, 2011, p. 1, Rigger 1995, p. 187-188. Aisin Gioro & Jin, 2007, p. 141.

²⁵ Enatsu, 2004, p. 13.

²⁶ Rigger, 1995, p. 188, Stary 1995, p. 1.

²⁷ Elliot, 2001, p. 39.

their fathers, and women changed banners when they changed family affiliation at the time of marriage.²⁸ These people were taxed, administered and mobilized through their banners²⁹. Nurhaci bolstered his power further in 1615 by setting the number of banners at eight (八旗, baqi) and appointing members of his family to lead each of them. The importance of the Eight Banners as the basic structure of Manchu organization has been researched creditably by Mark C. Elliot in the light of original Manchu-language documents (*The Manchu way – the eight banners and ethnic identity in late imperial China*, 2001). Generally speaking, during the Qing Dynasty all Manchus were banner people, except in the cases of depriving banner status as a punishment for criminal offence³⁰. Until mid 18th century, all bannermen were considered Manchus in wide sense albeit the Eight Banners was a multiethnic corporation. Especially after conquering Ming towns Mukden (also known as Fengtian and Shenyang) and Liaoyang, the number of Han bannermen grew in such ferocity that Nurhaci had to create a new special banner for them, Hanjun.³¹ Hanjun in Manchuria have been studied comprehensively by Enatsu Yoshiki (*Banner legacy – the rise of the Fengtian local elite at the end of the Qing*, 2004) who maintains that Hanjun composed the majority of bannermen in early 20th century Manchuria, and that some of these Hanjun as landowners were the local power holders of that time.

In 1616 Nurhaci set himself as the first Khan of “Later Jin Dynasty”, the dynasty’s name being a tribute to the earlier Jin Dynasty (1115-1234), which Nurhaci believed to be founded by his Jurchen ancestors. Later Jin, however, was short lived in name for Nurhaci died in 1626 and was succeeded by his eighth son and heir Hong Taiji (also known apparently by the mistaken name Abahai), who changed the name of the Later Jin to Qing Dynasty in 1636. The name Qing (清) was possibly chosen as a counterpart to the name Ming (明) since the components in these characters represented opposite elements – water in qing and fire in ming. During the same year Hong Taiji designated that all who were loyal to him, without regard for their ancestry or custom, were to be called Manchus. Thus Manchus included a varied set of ethnicities from Han Chinese and Mongol bannermen and Jurchen; these original Manchus did not share ubiquitous

²⁸ Crossley, 1997, p. 7.

²⁹ Enatsu, 2004, p. 13.

³⁰ Shao, 2011, p. 30.

³¹ Rigger, 1995, p. 189-190.

characteristics such as language, culture or biological traits. The Jianzhou Federation continued to compose the core and leading cadre of this miscellaneous group.³²

Hong Taiji enforced the power of his clan Aisin Gioro by creating a mythical past that legislated its supremacy. According to the myth, Aisin Gioro ancestor Bukuri Yongson unified the warring tribes in northeast and was rewarded by being elected the leader the Jurchens on the east slope of Changbai Mountain. Bukuri Yongson was birthed by a heavenly maid Fekulen who was conceived after swallowing a fruit given by a magpie, spirit messenger from the Lord of Heaven.³³ The purpose of this myth was to define Manchus as a creation of the Aisin Gioro clan, and whose existence could not be separated from the leadership of the Aisin Gioros. Being a Manchu meant especially being loyal to the Aisin Gioro clan and only secondarily practicing shamanistic rituals, speaking Manchu, training horse riding and archery, wearing side-buttoned clothing, eschewing footbinding and belonging to a clan with Manchu name.³⁴

The etymology of the term “Manchu” has been debated over centuries, but final conclusion on the matter has yet to be found. The Möllendorf transliteration “Manju” is closer to the actual pronunciation of the word, but due to inconsistent romanizations used in French and English literature during the 18th century, the term Manchu became established and is thus used until today. Today, Manchu in Chinese is manzu (满族), literally “the ethnic group Manchu” or “the Manchu tribe”. However, when Manchus originally realized the need to translate their name into Chinese, they chose the term manzhu (满珠), which had the approximate meaning of “complete pearl”, a term that resonated quite neutrally with Han Chinese. Later, they decided to change the name into manzhou (满洲), “full” or “satisfied continents” in order to emphasize the unification of their dominion.³⁵

H. E. M. James, originally an officer in Indian Civil Service during latter 19th century, travelled in Manchuria in 1886-1887 and speculated that the name Manchu indicates either some mythical founder of the Qing Dynasty, or a name of a place the dynasty

³² Huang, 2011, p. 2, Klieger, 2006, p. 216, Rigger, 1995, p. 191.

³³ Elliot, 2001, p. 44-46.

³⁴ Rigger 1995, p. 187-191.

³⁵ Shirokogoroff, 1924, p. 9-10.

sprang from³⁶. According to Shirokogoroff, Manchu could be a clan name that ceased to exist at some point of time.³⁷ Li Narangoa and many other modern-day researchers support the view that the term Manchu is of Tibetan origin, meaning “oriental brightness”; Manchu was an honorific title given by Mongol lamas to the sons of Nurhaci, and later Hong Taiji decided to use the term as a collective name for Jurchen tribes under his leadership.³⁸ Perhaps one of the most fantastic explanations on the name’s origin, however, was uttered by a Chinese researcher E. C. Ning in 1929. According to him, the name Manchu stems from an experience gained by a barbarian chief during a struggle between eastern barbarians and the Chinese. The barbarian chief, possibly Hong Taiji himself, was pursued by Chinese soldiers and decided to hide in a pig sty. The Chinese soldiers could not find him, but declared “满猪” (man zhu, full of pigs). In memory of the event the barbarian chief decided to call his subjects manzhu, perhaps without knowing the actual meaning of the utterance.³⁹ It is, however, very improbable that this tale has any basis in reality, although many Han Chinese undoubtedly wished it to be true. Instead, the story bears the very characteristics of Chinese sense of humor.

The original Manchus spoke Manchu language, originally a Jurchen dialect that was spoken by the members of the Jianzhou Federation. Jurchen was a Tungusic language that belonged to Altaic languages and was closely related to Evenk, Gold, Orochon, Nani and other languages of the hunting and fishing peoples in Northeast Asia and Russian Maritime Province. Manchu is more distantly connected to languages such as Japanese, Korean and Mongolian, besides which Manchu drew loan words from Mongolian, Russian and Chinese among others. During the Qing Dynasty, the ability to write and speak Manchu gradually perished. In the 19th century only few outside Manchuria spoke any Manchu. Today, the Manchu language is on the brink of extinction, but the Manchu dialect Sibö (also known as Xibe or Xibo, 锡伯) is still spoken by about 30,000 people in Xinjiang.

³⁶ James, 1888, p. 23.

³⁷ Shirokogoroff, 1924, p. 9-10.

³⁸ Li Narangoa, 2002, p. 4.

³⁹ Ning, 1929, p. 4.

The first Jurchen writing system originated from the Khitan system, which in turn originated from the iconographic writing system of Chinese. This writing system disappeared from use during the Ming Dynasty at the latest. During the 16th century the phonetic Mongolian script was used to devise Jurchen a new writing system. This writing system, however, did not become largely used before 1630's when circles and dots were added to complete the script. Thereafter, the Manchu writing system was called the "circled and dotted script" and allowed, for the first time, writing to represent the actual sound of Manchu.⁴⁰

2.1.1. The rise of the Qing

Bannermen under the leadership of Dorgon triumphed over Ming forces and the Qing dynasty succeeded Ming in 1644, Beijing as its capital. During the next years Manchu rule was consolidated and the proportions of the Qing Dynasty grew bigger than earlier dynasties'. In order to maintain these borders, Manchus founded banner garrisons in strategical locations all over China Proper and Manchuria, the result of which was the continuing heterogeneity of Manchus; instead of forming a homogenic group, Manchus who were separated by great distances commenced to integrate with the surroundings of the garrisons they habited. Shelley Rigger describes this Manchu dispersion by categorizing Qing-era Manchus into three classes: Qing ruling elite in Beijing, bannermen in garrisons and frontier Manchus who either stayed in Manchuria or returned there during the Qing Dynasty.⁴¹ Shirokogoroff, on the other hand, reported that Manchus themselves recognized three groups – the Ancient Manchus, the Modern Manchus and the Mongol-Manchus. The Ancient Manchus indicated those Manchus who moved southward and conquered China. The Modern Manchus meant Manchus who remained in Manchuria and joined the banners later. The Mongol-Manchus denoted those Mongols who were incorporated in the Manchu organization.⁴² For the purpose of this paper, the Rigger classification is applied.

The Qing ruling elite had to make concessions to local conditions by depending on the earlier Ming governance; Manchu administration was originally based on joint decision

⁴⁰ Crossley, 1997, p. 33-35.

⁴¹ Rigger, 1995.

⁴² Shirokogoroff, 1924, p. 11.

making, for example in a Manchu institution called the Court of Colonial Affairs (Lifan Yuan) where the heads of each banner were members. The Court was initially imported to China Proper, but was soon overthrown by earlier local institutions and ways of government. Manchu conquerors understood that in order to rule China, Manchus had to adjust to the Chinese political tradition since the Chinese would hardly submit willingly to a totally alien rule. Secondly, the number of Manchus qualified for administrative posts was far too small in order to rule an area as extensive as China. Therefore, a large and growing number of administrative posts were filled either by the Hanjun bannermen or Han Chinese who had experience from administration during the Ming dynasty. Thirdly, in order to reassert the status of the Aisin Gioro clan, preferring Confucian ruler-subject –relationship was more favorable than the more equal way of Manchu power sharing.⁴³

As Chinese institutions were introduced to the Manchu rule, also the portrayal of Manchus was changed. Originally Manchus were a varied, inclusive set of ethnicities that shared a common political goal of overthrowing the Ming dynasty, but Kangxi emperor (r. 1662-1722) replaced this description with an exclusive notion that centered on common ancestry and culture. Qianlong emperor (r. 1736-1795) further developed Kangxi's ideas by initiating a full reregistration of Hanjun. Bannermen who could not prove their ancestry back to the Jianzhou Federation were to be pushed back to the Han and Mongol categories. In order to support this, Qianlong emperor also ordered the compilation of "Researches on Manchu origin" (满洲源流考, Manzhou yuanliu kao) that codified clan histories and genealogies, standardized Manchu mythology and shamanistic practices and highlighted the fictional link between Jin and Qing dynasties. The aim of these projects was to emphasize the Manchus' social and historical role in order to better tie them into the imperial system and under the unquestionable rule of the Aisin Gioro clan⁴⁴.

In order to keep Manchus and Han Chinese separate and thus reassert Manchus' superiority, the Manchu rulers tried to sustain indigenous Manchu characteristics, but by formalizing Manchu culture they in reality stunted its flourishing altogether. The ruling elite chose some symbolic elements such as shamanistic rituals and martial

⁴³ Rigger 1995, p. 192-196.

⁴⁴ Rigger, 1995, p. 194-195. Crossley, 1997, p. 122-125.

tradition to represent Manchus, but these elements were increasingly non-apparent in normal Manchu life. While the Qing ruling elite governed according to Confucian values, spoke Chinese and dressed like Chinese, emperor and his Manchu advisers were mandated to take part in occasional ceremonial and recreational hunts. Bannermen had neither interest nor resources to do the same.

The restricting circumstances created by the formalization of Manchu culture, however, burdened especially the frontier Manchus who had stayed in Manchuria during and after the conquest of Ming Dynasty.⁴⁵ During the conquest of China the area of Manchuria was largely depopulated and soon after closed to Han immigration in order to preserve the Manchus' ancestral land. The frontier Manchu were impoverished banner population that was regarded by the Qing ruling elite as the "pure Manchus", but nevertheless enjoyed less privileges than their kin in garrisons elsewhere. In order to preserve the Manchu identity, the Qing ruling elite denied the frontier Manchus access to education and possibilities to develop with the rest of the Qing Dynasty. After establishing the Qing, Manchus were also forbidden to practice trades or take part in commerce. Furthermore, the frontier Manchus could not compete as farmers with illegal Han immigrants who had more experience in agriculture, and as uneducated they were, governmental career was improbable. Therefore majority of the frontier Manchu lived as absentee landlords and were heavily dependent on government stipends that were initiated in 1656 and continued as late as the 20th century. Although the Qing ruling elite seemingly praised Manchuria as their ancestral home, the unfortunate situation of the frontier Manchu ensured that they would hardly use Manchuria as a base for conquest of China as the ancestors of Qing ruling elite had done in the 17th century.⁴⁶

Similarly, the Manchu bannermen in garrisons were denied from taking part in agriculture, trade and commerce. Such fields of operation were not considered worthy of Manchus, and therefore some lived their whole lives unemployed. Even the garrisons' military role decreased when the importance of Chinese Army of "Green Standard" increased. However, because the Manchu population increased and their standard of living worsened, since 18th and 19th centuries bannermen were gradually allowed to apply for permission to seek private employment and live outside the

⁴⁵ Klieger, 2006, p. 216, Rigger 1995, p. 197.

⁴⁶ Rigger, 1995, p. 200-201.

garrison walls, but at the same time retain their banner registration. Albeit this was practically an unavoidable solution, Qianlong emperor and the Qing ruling elite saw it also as a threat. Qianlong emperor once complained “There could be difficulties in ordering the bannermen who normally worked as noodle vendors, sedan-chair carriers, carpenters, or ferry-men to catch up weapons and move against their neighbours or employers should the need arise”.⁴⁷

In other words, the pursuit to unify Manchus and revive the “Manchu Way” of Manchu language, military skills, origin myths, customs and practices was ultimately unsuccessful. Manchus continued to be a heterogenous and increasingly unequal unit of people.⁴⁸ However, it seems that even the most underprivileged Manchus continued to be proud of their status as the higher class in the Qing Dynasty. Manchus were unified mainly by this identification, and on practical level by the stipends that were paid to all Manchu males of certain age who could draw a bow.

2.1.2. The fall of the Qing

The Qing Dynasty met its demise in 1911-1912 due to several internal and external reasons that had emerged during its reigning centuries. Originally the Qing Dynasty stabilized central China, which had been previously afflicted by rebellions and agricultural shortages. During the Qing Dynasty, recovering farming lands, opening of previously uncultivated land and restoration and expansion of infrastructure was encouraged. This, however, resulted in a gigantic leap in population, which in turn led to immigration movements, unemployment and homelessness. By the 18th century, increasing agriculture caused deforestation, erosion and soil exhaustion in Central and Western China.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the status of foreigners in Qing Empire and the infamous Opium Wars attenuated the sovereignty of the Qing Dynasty. The self-sufficient Qing Dynasty had little interest in buying goods from Europe, while in European countries there was a great demand for Chinese products such as tea and silk. This resulted in a trade deficit,

⁴⁷ Crossley, 1997, p. 127-128, p. 130.

⁴⁸ Shao, 2011, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Crossley, 1997, p. 151-152.

which was solved by the United Kingdom by selling opium to the increasingly addicted population of the Qing Empire. Also many members of the Qing elite, banner officials and highest civil officials fell victim to the addictive power of the opium. Rich people were pawning their fortunes and poor people were selling their children in order to receive their daily dosages. The Qing court decided to proceed to put an end to the opium business, which resulted in the First Opium War in 1839-1842. The Qing Dynasty with their primitive and unreliable war equipment had little chance against the modern British fleet. The defeat in the Opium war resulted in the Treaty of Nanjing between the Qing Empire and the Great Britain in 1842.⁵⁰ The re-unstabilized conditions and the enroachment of foreign powers gave birth to several rebellions and turned the public opinion against the Qing rulers and Manchus in general. Especially the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 turned out to be devastating for frontier Manchus in Manchuria. Shirokogoroff reported that the Manchu population in the Aigun district sustained great losses. Thousands of them fled to Southern Manchuria and returned months later only to find their homes in ashes. They had lost their property including the clan lists that were vital in organizing clan activities.⁵¹

Acknowledging the rising hostility Han Chinese subjects felt towards their Manchu rulers, in the early 20th century the Qing ruling elite set about to lower the social inequality between Manchus and Hans. Few years before the demise of the Qing Dynasty, the empress dowager Ci Xi started to favour intermarriage between Manchus and Hans, equalized punishments to Manchus and Hans, and allowed Manchus to travel freely and take part in trade similarly to Han Chinese. Ci Xi further advised viceroys and governors of all provinces to employ Manchus and Hans without distinction.⁵² The change in policy was, however, too little too late. Finally, the massive civil disorder in the early 20th century resulted in Wuchang Uprising in October 10th in 1911, which led to the founding of a new government, the Republic of China (ROC). On January 1, 1912, Sun Yat-sen formally announced the establishment of ROC. After a round of negotiations, the child emperor Puyi was abdicated and the Qing Dynasty came to its end officially on February 2th, 1912.⁵³

⁵⁰ Crossley, 1997, p. 154-156.

⁵¹ Shirokogoroff, 1924, p. 4.

⁵² The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser, 14.03.1908.

⁵³ Shao, 2011, p. 68.

2.1.3. Manchus after the Qing

In order to avoid a prolonged conflict, the republican revolutionaries settled in an agreement with the Qing Dynasty's ruling elite. The Qing was to transmit its authority over to the Republican government, and the government would deal with the abdicated emperor generously according to the Articles of Favourable Treatment⁵⁴. Puyi was allowed to inhabit the premises in the Forbidden City until 1924, after which he fled to the Japanese concession in Tianjin. However, the situation was greatly graver for Manchus in lower positions and in banner garrisons all around China Proper. The fall of the Qing Dynasty came with the persecution and even mass murder of Manchus. Garrison walls were demolished and many bannermen left homeless. As legal adviser and author Percy Horace Kent noted in 1912, "No human sentiment of pity could stay their dreadful fate... shot down, sabered, committed suicide, burned alive, fled to be butchered elsewhere."⁵⁵ Or as Mark Elliot put it, "Manchus in all parts of China found themselves dispossessed, disfranchised, discriminated, and, in many places, disemboweled."⁵⁶

However, the devastating revolution had less influence in the lives of Manchus in Manchuria. They did not face any large-scale violence or strong anti-Manchu sentiment, because the local Manchu-Han demarcation was not that prominent. Manchuria was naturally multiethnic, and the large number of Hanjun bannermen in Manchuria acted as a barrier and lessened the inequality between Manchus and Hans. Furthermore, Manchus in Manchuria were not required to live inside garrison walls. Instead, especially nearing the end of the Qing Dynasty, the differences between Manchus and civilians in Manchuria became increasingly insignificant. A growing number of Manchus were involved in agriculture rather than military life.⁵⁷

In order to avoid further persecution, many disarmed bannermen and their families in China Proper assumed Chinese names, claimed Chinese ancestry and enrolled in Chinese armies.⁵⁸ Shifting household registration was relatively easy in a legal sense,

⁵⁴ Rhoads, 2000, p. 232.

⁵⁵ Kent, 1912, p. 131.

⁵⁶ Elliot, 2012, lecture.

⁵⁷ Shao, 2011, p. 30-35, 74.

⁵⁸ Rea, 1935, p. 205-206

but harder for those who simply could not hide their identity, such as members of the imperial household among others.⁵⁹ As the population of Manchus thus plummeted, speculation on the total extinction of Manchus ran wild in Western media. *New York Times* reported in 1928 that "Within a few decades, it seems evident, the Manchus will have ceased to exist as a separate race and will have been entirely merged with the Chinese..."⁶⁰. Some went as far as comparing Manchus to the Indians of North America, "for they are a dying race"⁶¹. The payment of the Eight Banner stipends continued partly in a reduced fashion until as late as 1924⁶², but ordinary bannermen who ceased to receive these stipends found it very difficult to get by. These destitute Manchus constituted one of the biggest social problems in the ROC society. In order to increase their employment, different sorts of job training institutions and textile factories were founded. Majority of Manchus continued to reside in Beijing, and some of them fled to Manchuria. There is, however, no information whatsoever on how many Manchus actually moved to Manchuria during the ROC period.⁶³

⁵⁹ Elliot, lecture 2012.

⁶⁰ New York Times, 28.10.1928.

⁶¹ The Strait Times, 24.11.1933.

⁶² Elliot, 2001, p. 390.

⁶³ Elliot, lecture 2012. Shao, 2011, p. 74.

2.2. Manchuria – a contested realm

Manchuria has always been an integral part of China ever since 2235 B.C.

E. C. Ning, 1929⁶⁴

*Manchuria has always constituted a special territory, geographically and historically
distinct from China Proper.*

The Japanese Government, 1933⁶⁵

*As a historical entity, however, it is a region under constant evolution connected with
internal and external political developments.*

Juha Janhunen, 1996⁶⁶

The area of Manchuria consists of approximately 2,7 million square kilometers. According to Janhunen, the total sphere of Manchuria is even wider. Besides the Continental Manchuria (in other words, the Manchuria Proper), the Greater Manchuria further includes the Peninsular Manchuria, which embodies areas such as Liaodong and the insular belt of Sakhalin and Japan.⁶⁷ Janhunen further separates the concepts of the physical reality and historical entity of Manchuria; while the physical reality has been relatively stable through centuries, the historical entity has undergone constant political change.⁶⁸ The events that influenced and led into the founding of the Manchukuo state are representative of such political fluctuation.

During the Manchukuo era, the historical claim to the area of Manchuria was considered a prime justification both against and for the sovereignty of Manchukuo. Today, it is widely accepted that Manchuria has been, for a prolonged time period, more or less integral part of China, as is de facto situation at the moment. The predominance of sinocentered scholarship has undoubtedly contributed to this state of affairs. However, the issue of Manchuria's "ownership" was greatly more controversial until as late as the

⁶⁴ Ning, 1929, p. 19.

⁶⁵ The Japanese Government, 1933, p. 18.

⁶⁶ Janhunen, 1996, p. 9.

⁶⁷ Janhunen, 1996, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Janhunen, 1996, p. 8-9.

end of WWII. During the Manchukuo period, Japanese officials oftentimes emphasized the separateness of Manchuria from China proper, while Chinese sported the view that China and Manchuria had an ancient link that entitled Manchuria to China. The opinions are likewise polarized in English language secondary sources such as journals and newspapers. For example Harry Hussey, an architect and observer based in Beijing, stated in 1933 that “Manchuria ... was very definitely incorporated as the integral part of China by the Manchus, and such it has remained to this day”⁶⁹ while George Bronson Rea, a Washington adviser to the Manchukuo government, argued in 1935 that “No rational being would dispute the absolute right of the Manchus to sovereignty over their homeland up to that year [1911]”.⁷⁰ This chapter takes a look into the contested history of Manchuria, since the strategical importance that Manchuria has played in East-Asian history for centuries had also an unavoidable impact on the situation of Manchus in Manchukuo. As Shao Dan argues, Manchuria as a borderland is a zone of conquest and contact, which results in relationship between the locals and regimes being constantly redefined⁷¹.

2.2.1 Inventing Manchuria

The idea of Manchuria is comparatively new; it was devised as late as in the beginning of 17th century when Manchus started their political expansion. According to Janhunen, it is improbable that before that time the region “existed as a coherent entity in the consciousness of its inhabitants”.⁷² However, since the 17th century Manchus aspired to emphasize the distinctions between Manchu elite and Han Chinese subjects by identifying the vast area in question as their homeland Manchuria, an enterprise aided by Jesuit cartographers.⁷³

During and after the conquest of the Ming Empire, the majority of Manchus emigrated from Manchuria to China Proper, and within twenty years the area faced near complete depopulation. *The Veritable Records* of the Qing dynasty, quoted by Shao Dan, proclaimed, “I saw abandoned towns and castles, collapsed houses and walls. On the

⁶⁹ Hussey, 1933, p. 8.

⁷⁰ Rea, 1935, p. 114-115.

⁷¹ Shao, 2011, p. 4.

⁷² Janhunen, 1996, p. 8.

⁷³ Li Narangoa, 2002, p. 4.

vast expense of this fertile land, there were no people.”⁷⁴ At first, in order to populate the vacated area, emigration from China Proper to Manchuria was encouraged. This policy, however, was forfeited in 1740 when immigration was forbidden altogether. On an ideological level, the Manchu rulers wanted to preserve Manchuria as their pure ancestral land free from foreign influence. On a more practical level, suspending the immigration protected the interests of local Manchus who had had favourable connections with the Qing rulers since the late Ming Dynasty.⁷⁵ Willow Palisades, a curious system of ditches and embankments planted with willows, was erected on some areas between China Proper and Manchuria in order to enforce this policy. However, Han Chinese from nearby areas such as Shandong and Hubei carried on immigrating to Manchuria especially on a seasonal basis for agricultural migrant work. The immigration policy was once again reversed in the 19th century in order to solve domestic economic problems and strengthen the Qing Empire’s northeastern border against Russian expansion. An influx of Han Chinese immigrants that followed changed the demographics of Manchuria irreversibly, and local Manchus became quickly a minority.⁷⁶ Albeit Manchus in China proper considered Manchuria the home of their ancestors, they were not enthusiastic to immigrate to this northern and destitute region. Likewise the Qing ruling elite had no plans to return, although after the demise of the Qing Dynasty some of them re-discovered the potential of Manchuria as a base from which to re-found the Qing.⁷⁷ Attitudes towards Manchuria were altogether contradictory. For example criminals were often exiled to Manchuria.⁷⁸

Until the enormous immigration movements in the 19th century, Manchuria’s special position as the ancestral Manchu homeland was sustained by a separate administrative system as well as a series of policies that categorized the banner people there – the frontier Manchus and Hanjun – differently from the rest of the banner system. Mukden (present day Shenyang, previously known as Fengtian) was treated as the vice-capital of the Manchu empire, and out of the Six Boards in Beijing five had counterparts in Manchuria, in other words the Boards of Revenue, Rites, War, Justice and Works.

⁷⁴ Shao, 2011, p. 23.

⁷⁵ Shao, 2005, p. 25.

⁷⁶ Li Narangoa, 2002, p. 5.

⁷⁷ Shao, 2005, p. 24-26.

⁷⁸ Shao, 2011, p. 40.

However, since the mid 19th century Manchuria was regarded increasingly as a territory of the Empire rather than as a homeland of Manchus.⁷⁹

2.2.2 Spheres of influence and interest

Although Manchuria is now considered an inseparable part of the PRC, it can be argued that this situation is mainly a result of the Han Chinese immigration movement that grew into substantial proportions during the 19th century, rather than some ancient historical claim for the area.

Owen Lattimore divides Manchuria into Chinese, Korean and Mongolian spheres. According to Lattimore, Southern Manchuria has had a close connection to China Proper since as early as 300 BC, an argument supported by neolithic evidence and similarities in culture. However, western plains of Manchuria have been more closely connected with Mongolia instead, while the forested mountains in the east have been part of the ancient kingdom of Goguryeo (37 BC – 668 AD), which Lattimore associates with Korea.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the interaction between Manchuria and Korean kingdoms and later modern Korea has continued until today on immigrational and economical levels.

As mentioned earlier, the Russian expansion in Siberia and the formation of Sino-Russian border in the 19th century increased Manchuria's strategical importance in international politics, which urged the Qing ruling elite to reverse their immigration policies in Manchuria in order to better integrate the area into the rest of the empire. Manchuria, however, had little chance to resist foreign influence, and it received little help from rest of the Empire whose military and financial resources were not up to par. Therefore not only Russia, but also several Western countries and Japan had free reigns to pursue their interests in Manchuria.

Following the years of Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan endeavoured to build a larger empire, and established its presence in Manchuria as a result of its conquests in East Asia and the first Sino-Japanese war in 1894. The turn of the century was further

⁷⁹ Shao, 1995, p. 25-26.

⁸⁰ Lattimore, 1940, p. 103-105.

characterized by rivalry between Russia and Japan, when Russia conquered the whole area during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. Japan, however, challenged Russia's control of the area successfully in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Since then, the Qing Empire and later the ROC had little influence in Manchuria.⁸¹ As a result of the war, Japan acquired the leased territory of Kwantung and extraterritorial rights to the South Manchurian Railway Zone, which was a strip of land that followed the South Manchurian Railway tracks. Based on these acquisitions, Japan founded two of its most important agencies in Manchuria and, later on, in Manchukuo – the Kwantung Army and the South Manchurian Railway Company. The division of Manchuria into Russian and Japanese spheres of influence manifested most visibly in the two railroad systems: the northern Chinese Eastern Railway owned by Russia and the southern South Manchurian Railway owned by Japan.⁸²

The South Manchurian Railway Company (SMRC, also known as Mantetsu) was founded in 1906. SMRC was not only a railroad company, but quickly expanded its enterprises to include coalmines, construction, education, research, logistics and so on. Since 1920's onwards also several branches and joint ventures were founded by SMRC, such as Manchukuo Film Association Ltd. in 1937. During the 1920's SMRC provided over a quarter of the Japanese Government's tax revenues⁸³. In 1936, SMRC employed 146 000 people including Japanese, Koreans and Manchurians. In a leaflet published by SMRC in 1936 its role is defined rather dramatically as "the carrier of the light of civilization into Manchuria".⁸⁴

Japan further consolidated its influence after the 1911 Revolution and during the regime of warlord Zhang Zuolin that followed. Zhang Zuolin's grand scheme of conquering China Proper and restoring the Qing Dynasty, however, collided with Japanese plans, and he was finally assassinated in 1928. His son and successor Zhang Xueliang, however, was even less enthusiastic to co-operate with Japanese, and ardently supported Chiang Kai-shek and Kuomintang.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Shao, 2011, p. 25.

⁸² Janhunen, 1996, p. 10.

⁸³ Young, 1998, p. 31-32.

⁸⁴ South Manchurian Railway Company, 1936, p. 37.

⁸⁵ Mitter, 2003, p. 150. Enatsu, 2004, p. 1-2.

The internal struggle in the newly founded ROC and the Open Door Policy further allowed foreign countries to establish their presence in Manchuria. Its population became increasingly multinational and multiethnic. The Kwantung Army was anxious for Japan to achieve some kind of resolution in Manchuria, but the Japanese Government was slow to decide on the matter. Finally, in order to ensure dominance in Manchuria, the Japanese Kwantung Army set out to invade the whole Manchuria once and for all by staging an infamous event known as the Mukden Incident (also referred to as the Manchurian Incident) in the night of 18.9.1931; a group of Japanese soldiers exploded a part of Japanese-owned railway line, accused Chinese for it, and the Kwantung Army used this as an excuse to capture the three eastern provinces by 1933. The Japanese Government acknowledged this as something that had de facto happened, and there was no reversing it. It has been disputed whether these soldiers acted on their own, and if not, on whose orders. Nevertheless, soon after the cabinet of Tokyo was changed into a more jingoist one, and the conquest of Manchuria began to be seen as a positive prospect to be exploited.

Manchukuo was founded on 18th of February, 1932. The Declaration of Independence promised in a grandiose manner that the era of chaos, disorder and corruption has come to an end, and a new order shall begin. According to the declaration, “Several months have already elapsed since the outbreak of the incident in the Northeastern Provinces. The desire of the populace for the restoration of peace is like that of the hungry for food and the thirsty for water, and it is now their most earnest hope that there shall come a complete regeneration and new birth.”⁸⁶ Manchukuo received almost immediately a strongly polarized reaction in Western countries. Some identified it as a puppet of Japan, while others praised it as a wonder of modern state construction. The puppet status of Manchukuo is further discussed in chapter 3.1.1.

⁸⁶ Manchukuo Government, 1932, p. 1-2.

3. Manchus and Manchukuo

Manchuria in the 1920's and 1930's was a harsh, unromantic place. The northern region especially could be compared to the Wild West of North America – tough, testing, and lawless. In Manchuria, bandits took the place of outlaws, and opium was used instead of whiskey. But the Northeast lacked the glamour of the West – there were no cowboys, sheriffs, or Diamond Lils.

Thomas Gottschang & Diana Lary, 2000⁸⁷

”What I saw in Manchuria this time did not exist when I was there during the regime of Chang Hsueh-liang. There are many schools, wonderful roads which are rapidly being extended, a monetary system, industrial and agricultural development, building construction, marvellous city planning, and a host of other things that had never existed before. The work of the Government and military authorities is amazing and Manchoukuo is one of the great centres of the world which bears watching. The work carried on there is actual and real. The experiment in statecraft there can be called a wonder of the age.”

Francis W. Clarke, cited in 1936⁸⁸

3.1. Manchukuo – the Child of Conflict

Today, Manchukuo is known only to few Westerners, but during its existence Manchukuo gathered vast international interest and dispute. Those missionaries, journalists, political advisers and adventurers who travelled in Manchukuo and wrote about it left behind very contradictory statements on the nature of this ”World’s Newest Nation”, ”Jewel of Asia”, ”Child of Conflict” or ”Switzerland of the Far East”. Manchukuo was ethnically versatile, politically controversial, economically promising and both mysterious and unknown to most Europeans and Americans.

⁸⁷ Gottschang & Lary, 2000, p. 133.

⁸⁸ Collier & Malone, 1936, p. 174-175.

Manchukuo was a single-party state under nominal constitutional monarchy. The nominal head of state was Puyi, the last emperor of the Qing Dynasty, who acted as Chief Executive from 1932 to 1934, and, when he finally had his greatest wish fulfilled, as Emperor Kangde from 1934 to 1945. The highest political organ was the Government whose ministers were mainly local Han Chinese and, to a lesser degree, locals from other ethnicities such as Koreans, Mongols and Manchus. Most of them, as Enatsu points out, were local power holders and influential landowners already before 1932⁸⁹. Some ministers were Han Chinese Qing veterans from China Proper. However, it seems that in practice the Japanese vice-ministers, and finally the leaders of the Kwantung Army, conducted most policy-making. There was no direct connection between the Manchukuo Government and Japanese Government; instead the Kwantung Army had relatively high power in Manchukuo's politics as a middleman⁹⁰. The South Manchurian Railway Company maintained its enterprises, such as managing rail transportation, freight business, research and education, after the establishment of Manchukuo. Due to SMRC's humanitarian goal, its oftentimes leftist employees mixed uneasily with the Kwantung Army officers who represented the rightist imperial presence and ideals.⁹¹ This regularly resulted in contradictory actions of different authorities.⁹²

The official state ideologies of Manchukuo included neo-traditionalist concepts such as Pan-Asianism (亚细亚注意 Yaxiyazhuyi), Harmony between the five races (五族协和 Wuzuxiehe) and the Kingly Way (王道 Wangdao). Pan-Asianism was a Japanese idea of the unification of all Asian races under the leadership of Japanese as the ultimate race, whose duty was to lead them to a greater future. The Japanese felt especially jaded when they were not treated equally in the League of Nations, which further fuelled the Asians versus Westerners –dichotomy. The harmony between the five races, on the other hand, was an ideology derived originally from Sun Yat-sen⁹³, and it stated that the five main races in Manchukuo – Japanese, Manchus, Han Chinese, Mongols and Koreans – were to live equally in harmony. The constitution of Manchukuo reads “There shall be no discrimination with respect to race and caste among those people who now reside within the territory of the new State. Besides the races of the Hans,

⁸⁹ Enatsu, 2004, p. 5.

⁹⁰ Han, 2004, p. 461.

⁹¹ Mitter, 2000, p. 44.

⁹² Li Narangoa & Cribb, 2003, p. 17.

⁹³ Giles, 2013 (1912), p. 72-73.

Manchus, Mongols, Japanese and Koreans, the peoples of other foreign countries may upon application have their rights guaranteed.”⁹⁴ The five colours in the flag of Manchukuo represent these five races (see appendix A, page 82). In reality, Manchukuo was never engineered to be a nation state solely for the Manchus, granted that the name of the state is derived from Manchus and Manchuria. Instead, Manchukuo was designed as a multiethnic state in the style of Canada. The Concordia Association, an umbrella organization under the Manchukuo government, was founded in 1931 in order to promote Pan-Asianism and multiculturalism evident in Manchukuo, and most of all legitimize the new state⁹⁵. The Kingly Way was a traditional Confucian idea about the duties of the sovereign, and at first Puyi felt very obliged to follow this ideology, but discarded it after realizing how little he could impact Manchukuo’s policies⁹⁶. The actual implementation of these ideologies was dubious at best. The Japanese sense of self-importance was oftentimes in direct conflict with any harmony between the races⁹⁷. As Mitter summarizes, “in the initial period the Japanese were keen to use persuasion rather than coercion where they could in order to stabilize the new state”. However, the Japanese way of ruling became harsher especially after the promotion of mass migration to Manchukuo in 1936 and the beginning of war between China and Japan in 1937⁹⁸. There was little space for Kingly Ways and virtuous ruling⁹⁹ – Manchukuo became increasingly a supplier for the Japanese war machine and decreasingly a development project that it had been in the 1920’s and earlier half of 1930’s when SMRC had a more decisive role in the area.

After the establishment, the capital was moved from Mukden to Changchun (长春), which was renamed Xijing (新京), literally “The New Capital“ (see appendix B, page 83, the map of Manchukuo). Xijing was located in a strategical and central place in the Manchurian railway network and nearer to Japan’s colony of Korea. The ancient Manchu capital of Mukden lost its earlier position. Therefore changing the capital had both practical and symbolical meaning.¹⁰⁰ The Manchukuo area consisted of about 1,3 million km², or as many contemporary accounts on Manchukuo demonstrated,

⁹⁴ Manchoukuo Government, 1932, p. 4-5.

⁹⁵ Han, 2004, p. 468.

⁹⁶ Aisin Gioro, 2010 (1989, 1964), p. 245.

⁹⁷ Tamanoi, 2005, p. 14-19.

⁹⁸ Mitter, 2000, p. 6.

⁹⁹ Li Narangoo & Cribb, 2003, p. 17.

¹⁰⁰ Lattimore, 1940, p. 103-105. Harris, 1998, p. 83. Rhoads, 2000, p. 272.

approximately the combined area of contemporary Germany and France.¹⁰¹ The area of Manchukuo was also somewhat expanded in the course of its existence. Most prominent additions included the Province of Jehol in 1933 (also known as Rehe), an area which today is divided between Hebei, Liaoning and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

The population of Manchukuo was about 30 million when the state was founded, but rose up to about 40-50 million during its existence. Demographics are quite unreliable and therefore should be viewed as merely suggestive, but the area of Manchuria was, before and during the Manchukuo period, undoubtedly a target of one of the most extensive immigration movements known in human history. The unstable conditions in China Proper during the 1930's and 1940's encouraged an influx of Han Chinese immigrants who sought better prospects in Manchuria. These Chinese farmers and some smaller local ethnic groups lived mostly in rural areas, while more international population settled in cities. For example, according to the Manchukuo Government, in 1933 Harbin was inhabited by Chinese, Taiwanese, Soviets, white Russians, Japanese, Koreans, Brits, Americans, Germans, Italians, Poles, Jews, Greeks, Turks, Austrians, Hungarians, Danes, Latvians, Portuguese, Czechs, Armenians, Belgians, Serbs, Swedes, Romanians, Swiss, Indians, not to mention Mongols, Manchus and other Tungus groups.¹⁰² Manchukuo was indeed a melting pot in the making. Japanese influence was concentrated on larger towns and cities, which were part of the railroad network, and therefore also most of the development occurred in cities.

3.1.1 Manchukuo – a puppet state?

In order to fully comprehend the situation Manchus were in in Manchukuo, it is important to consider the implications on Manchukuo's status as Japan's puppet state. After all, nominating Manchukuo a puppet state has resulted in staggering gaps in research, such as a shortage of analyses on Manchus in Manchukuo. Furthermore, in order to shed light on the complexity of Manchus' situation in Manchukuo, it is quite imperative to take discussion on Manchukuo's political state of affairs into account.

¹⁰¹ e.g. South Manchurian Railway Company, 1936, p. 1.

¹⁰² Tamanoi, 2005, p. vii.

As Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb point out, the term "puppet state" appears to have entered English language originally as the description of Manchukuo. However, the phenomenon indicated is much older and prevalent than this etymology suggests. The term puppet state is oftentimes used to denote the nominally independent states created within the Japanese and German empires during WWII. However, already at the end of the 18th century Napoleon founded several likewise nominally independent republics in parts of Europe not annexed to France, for example the Batavian, Helvetic, Cisalpine, Ligurian and Parthenopaen Republics. Furthermore, the Soviet Russia and later Soviet Union established multiple similar states such as Tannu Tuva and the short-lived Far Eastern Republic, but these were generally called satellites rather than puppets. States connected to the United States in the same fashion, on the other hand, have generally been called neo-colonies or client states instead.¹⁰³

Outwardly, Manchukuo was certainly a sovereign state. It had legislative, executive and judicial systems of government aided by Japanese advisers. It had formal symbols of an independent state, such as declaration of independence, a head of state, a national flag and anthem, and a capital. However, according to two definitions of "puppet state" described by Suk-Jung Han, Manchukuo was indeed a puppet. According to the standard definition, a puppet state is a country whose major political decisions are made by a foreign government or a hegemon. According to the socialist definition, a puppet state is a country that allows stationing of foreign troops or has military links with great powers for its defence – a notion used especially by North Korea to portray South Korea.¹⁰⁴ The strong Japanese presence in Manchukuo and the undeniable influence of the Kwantung Army in local policymaking resulted in a cacophony of reactions from other nations. Partly due to the unawareness of the actual situation in Manchukuo, the issue aroused numerous opinions. For example in Finland, the Patriotic People's Movement (*Isänmaallinen kansanliike*), a nationalist and anti-communist political party, applauded Japan for saving Manchuria from the chaos that China had plummeted in. The other extreme was represented by parties such as the Agrarian League (*Maalaisliitto*) and the Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP), who condemned Japanese presence in Manchuria and saw the foundation of Manchukuo outright

¹⁰³ Li Narangoa & Cribb, 2003, p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ Han, 2004, p. 459.

unscrupulous in nature.¹⁰⁵ Such disharmonious political climate on the Manchukuo issue was comparable to several other Western states. However, as Suk-Jung Han points out, according to both standard and socialist definitions most states in the 20th century would be puppet states.¹⁰⁶ Negative approach to Manchukuo was undoubtedly fuelled by the publication of so-called *Tanaka Memorial* (1927), which was allegedly composed by Japanese civil and military officials in a conference in Mukden and later fell into Chinese hands. According to the memorial, the Japanese planned to first conquer Manchuria, then China Proper, Soviet Union, the bases in Pacific and finally the whole world. However, today the Tanaka Memorial is seen as a forgery and a Soviet trick to get Japan and China to attack each other in order to provide Soviet Union with better footing. The Japanese original of the memorial has never been found.¹⁰⁷

Albeit sovereignty composes a formal principle of international affairs, "at the best the right of independence is, and always has been, the right of the most powerful", as Professor Sterling Edmunds argued¹⁰⁸. It can be concluded that Manchukuo was not exceptional in its lack of so-called true independence. Manchukuo was not officially a sovereign state because it did not receive international recognition. In reality, however, Manchukuo did achieve certain form of sovereignty; the Manchukuo Government oftentimes resisted Tokyo – its own metropole, as Suk-Jung Han conveyed.¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that Manchukuo, unlike earlier Japanese conquests of Hokkaido, Okinawa and Korea, was not directed under strong Japanization measures. Instead, Japan was merely placed in the summit of the hierarchical order while other institutions from the pre-occupation era were left mainly intact¹¹⁰. Suk-Jung Han furthermore suggests that Manchukuo presents a complex and flexible nature of sovereignty since its sovereignty was given from the outside. Manchukuo Government's pursuit to establish Manchukuo as an independent state was easily papered over internationally and in China Proper by nominating Manchukuo a puppet state. The concept of puppet state was a convenient way to endorse Manchuria as an integral part of China and whose residents had no real intention to keep the area separated from China Proper, and therefore the historical

¹⁰⁵ Uola, 1995, p. 246-247.

¹⁰⁶ Han, 2004, p. 459.

¹⁰⁷ Crow, 2011, p. 16-17.

¹⁰⁸ as quoted by Rea, 1935, p. 177.

¹⁰⁹ Han, 2004, p. 473.

¹¹⁰ Li Narangoa & Cribb, 2003, p. 4.

narrative of Manchukuo as a prime example of a puppet state has remained generally accepted until today.

One of the basic contemporary and modern arguments in debate surrounding Manchukuo's sovereignty, as discussed in chapter 2.2., is indeed the question of the historical claim to Manchuria. The answer is certainly not unambiguous. One of the underlying notions of the anti-Manchuism that flourished in China Proper in the beginning of the 20th century was that Manchus were foreigners whose actual homeland was Manchuria. For example famous anti-Manchu radical Zhang Binglin argued that Manchus should be banished from China to the Three Eastern Provinces, which they could have as an autonomous area. He furthermore assessed that Japanese were less foreign to Chinese than Manchus since they had similar script and habits. Shao Dan reveals that according to evidence unearthed recently by Chinese and Japanese scholars, Sun Yat-sen had even a secret plan to lease Manchuria to Japan.¹¹¹ However, as the Russian and Japanese presence in Manchuria increased, public opinion in China Proper gradually turned against regarding Manchuria as a separate area. By 1930's the universal sentiment was that Manchuria had actually been an integral part of China for centuries, and the founding of Manchukuo was a dire offence against Chinese sovereignty. This shift in opinion was admittedly supported by the increasing preference to regard China itself, originally an Western idea, as a larger area equivalent to Qing Empire rather than the earlier concept of Middle Kingdom, which encompassed only the innermost provinces where Han Chinese civilization purportedly developed. The resulting "Reconceptualization of the Manchuria-China Relationship"¹¹², concept devised by Shao Dan, produced an international conflict which the League of Nations (LN) aspired to solve in order to maintain peace in the Far East. LN appointed a commission led by Victor Bulwer-Lytton, the 2nd Earl of Lytton, to research the causes of the Mukden Incident. The Lytton Commission spent six weeks in Manchuria during spring 1932 and released an account of the situation in Manchuria based on eyewitnesses' reports and personal observations. However, the results of the committee satisfied neither the Japanese nor the Chinese. According to the committee, Chinese were faulty of anti-Japanese propaganda while Japanese had taken part in aggressive actions. In spite of such an attempt to preserve impartiality, the Lytton Committee, in

¹¹¹ Shao, 2011, p. 86-88.

¹¹² Shao, 2011, p. 86-88.

Daily Telegraph's correspondent's words, "insists on the withdrawal of Japanese troops within the South Manchuria railway zone, and recommends the establishment of an organisation under the sovereignty of China to deal with conditions in Manchuria, taking due account of the rights and interests of Japan, and the formation of a committee of negotiation for the application of these and other recommendations."¹¹³ In light of the Lytton Committee's conclusion and international agreements, the League of Nations condemned Japanese aggression in Manchuria, which resulted in Japan withdrawing from the league in 1933. The League of Nations, however, had little actual influence in the Manchukuo issue, and the event rather presents an example of LN's inability to enforce its decisions. European states were more concerned about their own problems at the eve of the Second World War, and United States, which was not even a member-state to LN, invoked its non-interventionist policy. Neither did the lack of a major spontaneous independence movement free of Japanese influence in Manchuria prevent other foreign nations from recognizing Manchukuo's sovereignty *de jure*, or tie trade relations with it and therefore recognize it *de facto*. It rather appears that Manchukuo's foreign relations paralleled those of Japan. Especially after the beginning of WWII, states that officially recognized Manchukuo were either influenced or controlled by Japan or Germany. On the other hand, states that did not officially recognize Manchukuo had tense relations with Japan and their economic interests in Manchukuo were threatened by the strong Japanese presence in the area and the bilateral agreements between Manchukuo and Japan.

The Lytton Committee's report inspired the publication of a host of commentaries written by parties who saw themselves better fit to voice informed opinions about the Manchukuo issue than the members of the Lytton Committee who only spent a few weeks in the freshly founded state. Chokiuro Kadono remarked in his leaflet *A Businessman's View of the Lytton Report* that the Lytton committee lacked profound understanding of the actual situation in Manchukuo, and that Japan has been the key player in maintaining peace and progress in Manchuria for decades. Furthermore, he argues, sovereignty has always been passed in China from dynasty to another "at the point of the sword".¹¹⁴ A document titled *The Japanese Government's Statement of Observations on Lytton Report* insists that the Lytton Committee downplayed Japanese

¹¹³ The Sydney Morning Herald, 16.02.1933.

¹¹⁴ Chokiuro, 1932, p. 1-2.

sources and overestimated the genuineness of dubious Chinese sources. The report further continues that, unlike the Lytton Committee claims, there was a local "Manchuria for Manchurians" independence movement before the Manchukuo period. In addition, the report highlights the restoration movement for re-founding the Qing Dynasty. "There can be no doubt that the idea of proclaiming independence, which had also a certain affinity with the idea of restoring the Manchu Dynasty, had its origin, therefore, entirely among the Chinese, Manchus and Mongols."¹¹⁵ George Bronson Rea concludes that there is no proof of Manchus' extinction, and therefore the Chinese claim over the Manchus' homeland is unjust¹¹⁶. Harry Hussey offers an opposite view in his booklet *Manchukuo in relation to world peace – things not told in the report of the commission enquiry*. According to Hussey, Manchus themselves worked actively for incorporating Manchuria as an integral part of China. The Chinese had been habiting South-Manchuria for two millenias while Manchus had sinicized and did not differ from Han Chinese in any relevant aspect. Hussey concludes that Manchus consider themselves Chinese and are loyal to the present government of China.¹¹⁷ All things considered, the Japanese attempt at legalizing the state of Manchukuo, by maintaining that it was a product of Manchus' ethnic realization of the need for their own nation state, was based on flimsy footing, and they renounced such argument soon after establishing Manchukuo. The evident conflict between the "Harmony between the five races" and Manchukuo as Manchus' nation-state was presumably the result of contemporary understanding that nation-states were the natural unit in which people should be distributed, and that in order to legitimize the Manchukuo state it too had to comply with such idea. However, such endeavour was quite impossible since in many parts of Asia, ethnic groups were intermingled in a fashion that made constructing borders between them unfeasible.¹¹⁸ The argument that there was no independence movement in Manchuria to begin with is likewise an exaggeration. As Mitter points out, levels of both resistance and support for the new state and Japanese occupation have been dramatized in popular memory¹¹⁹. Japanese occupation of Manchuria set off a

¹¹⁵ The Japanese Government, 1933, p. 18-21.

¹¹⁶ Rea, 1935, p. 114-115.

¹¹⁷ Hussey, 1933, p. 9-11.

¹¹⁸ Li Narangoa & Cribb, 2003, p. 4-8.

¹¹⁹ Mitter, 2000, 16.

powerful resistance movement in China Proper, but local elites in Manchukuo were keen to collaborate instead¹²⁰.

In retrospect, what is more relevant today than Manchukuo's actual level of sovereignty is how the persistent narrative that Manchukuo was a puppet state has influenced the historiographies on the subject. The concept of puppet state includes hidden presumptions, many of which are more or less unsound in the case of Manchukuo, such as that local leaders did not have any power and that Manchukuo was merely one of Japan's colonies, founded with coercion and aggression. Regardless of how Manchukuo's sovereignty is perceived, it was habited by millions of Manchus of whom not much is known about. The following chapter endeavours to relate a general overview of these Manchus.

¹²⁰ Mitter, 2003, p. 164-165.

3.2. Manchus in Manchukuo

Demographics on Manchus in Manchukuo are extremely unreliable. H.E.M. James reported already in 1888 that “Manchus are now a rarity in their own country”. According to James, Manchus were to be found at all garrison towns, in the neighbourhood of Manchu magistrates and in the remote recesses of the mountains.¹²¹ Although the number of Manchus was dwindling in comparison to the thriving Han Chinese population, Manchus were hardly extinct. According to Japanese sources cited by Shao Dan, there were about 5,65 million Manchus in Manchukuo in 1935, 4,63 million in 1936 and 4,35 million in 1937¹²² (see appendix D, page 84). According to Chinese sources referred to by Thomas Scharping, by 1940 there were only 2,56 million Manchus combined in Manchuria and Northeastern Mongolia combined¹²³ (see appendix C, page 84). However, gathering any trustworthy information on the topic is extremely challenging. First of all, in order to legislate the Manchukuo state, Japanese officials saw it fit to exaggerate the number of Manchus especially in the beginning of the Manchukuo era, while Chinese, particularly during the PRC period, belittled the number, or did not take Manchus in Manchukuo into consideration. Secondly, there is no statistics on how many Manchus fled from China Proper to Manchuria and Manchukuo after the fall of the Qing Empire. Shao Dan remarks that the violence and discrimination Manchus faced in China Proper after 1911 did not cause a remarkable migration to Manchuria, and on that behalf Manchuria’s demographic structure apparently remained intact¹²⁴. Thirdly, the Manchukuo period was perhaps the height of Manchu dispersion, therefore discussing them as one group is very problematic. As mentioned earlier, after the fall of the Qing Dynasty many Manchus took up Han Chinese identities, and it is quite impossible to know who were Han Chinese and who were ex-Manchus who had taken Han Chinese names but still possibly regarded themselves as Manchus. Furthermore, Japanese and Chinese officials used quite different methods to conduct census. Yet some references to Manchus are still to be found in contemporary sources.

¹²¹ James, 1888, p. 107-108.

¹²² Shao, 2011, p. 310.

¹²³ Scharping, 1998, p. 25.

¹²⁴ Shao, 2005, p. 41.

As Shirokogoroff pointed out, the Chinese influence on Manchus was at its greatest in South Manchuria, and at its weakest in North Manchuria. In practice Manchu language was extinct except in small villages in North Manchukuo. Undoubtedly culture exchange in Manchukuo increased as the infrastructure expanded, but the small villages in North Manchuria remained, to a large extent, outside of Japanese influence. Shirokogoroff also reported that many Manchus in Manchuria, having lost their political influence, were actually in a quite confused state about what actually was part of indigenous Manchu culture and what was not. For example, as soon as the revolution broke out in 1911, Manchus in Aigun district cut off their long plaits in protest, regarding it as a “Chinese fashion”. Likewise, these Manchus considered Confucianism as a purely Manchu idea.¹²⁵ On the other hand, Manchus had forgotten some of their industries, such as pottery and metalwork, and had later read from Chinese books that these industries are actually Chinese inventions, and it did not occur to them to doubt such a proposition.¹²⁶ Situation in South Manchukuo was defined by closeness and intermingledness between different groups. British diplomat Sir Alexander Hosie noted in 1904 that there are few outward differences between Manchus and Han Chinese. Unlike Han Chinese, Manchu women did not have bound feet and wore distinctive coiffure and dress. However, Hosie could not distinguish Manchu and Han Chinese males.¹²⁷ His view was undoubtedly shared by many contemporary Westerners who did not have profound understanding of the ethnic complexity in Northeast Asia. However, the prevalence of such a view has contributed to Manchus’ invisibility later in Manchukuo.

Manchus in Manchukuo combined several religions and philosophies for their use. Shamanism is considered an indigenous Manchu religion to the extent that the word shaman is said to be the only loan word from Manchu that exists in English (in reality, however, the Manchu word saman was transferred to English via Russian, which explains the sibilant sh or š). Due to the cultural interaction between Han Chinese, Mongols and Manchus since early Manchu and Jurchen history, also Buddhism, Taoism, and finally Confucianism as the state ideology of the Qing were adopted.¹²⁸ However, it seems probable that during the Manchukuo period shamanism was mainly

¹²⁵ Shirokogoroff, 1924, p. 147-148.

¹²⁶ Shirokogoroff, 1924, p. 130.

¹²⁷ Hosie, 1980 (1904), p. 155-156.

¹²⁸ e.g. Fochler-Hauke, 1941, p. 260 & p. 262.

practiced by the frontier Manchus who dwelled in rural areas. The flourishing of Shamanism was stunted already during the Qing Dynasty, when Qing ruling elite aimed at standardizing it. Buddhism, on the other hand, thrived both before and during the Manchukuo period.¹²⁹ For example Puyi was a devoted Buddhist. His last wife Li Shuxian told in her memoirs in 1984 that "I didn't believe in Buddhism, but Puyi did. I knew that he had worshipped every day in the Imperial Palace, in Changchun, during the period of the Manchukuo."¹³⁰ Besides canonized philosophies and religions, Manchus sported various folk beliefs, such as one should not eat dog meat or wear dog hides, because dog had an important status in Manchu mythologies. During the Manchukuo period, however, Japanese appointed Shintoism as the official state religion. Hundreds of Shinto temples were erected all around the country, and some Manchus in nominal leading positions, such as Puyi, were forced to pay their respects first in Shinto temples and only secondarily worship ancestors at the Qing tombs outside Mukden¹³¹. From 1940 onwards the Manchukuo government proclaimed that public participation in state Shinto rituals will be a civic duty for all¹³². On the other hand, fearing Soviet influence in the area, the Concordia Association held frequent anticommunism and anti-atheism rallies, which resulted also in appreciation of local religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism¹³³. In addition, many European and American missionaries roamed Manchukuo. For example Danish missionaries considered their work in Manchuria to be quite fruitful, but Japanese control over everything made things slightly more difficult for them. One Danish missionary stated anxiously in Mukden in 1929 that "Chinese need Christianity in order to fight against the three dangers: the black danger (opium), the red danger (Communists) and the yellow danger (Japanese)!"¹³⁴ Despite the official preference for Shintoism, the Manchukuo period was certainly more religiously multifaceted and liberal than the later PRC era.

In the beginning of 20th century, government ordered the obligatory schooling language in Manchuria to be Manchu, but after the fall of the Qing Dynasty this policy was

¹²⁹ Aisin Gioro & Jin, 2007, p. 129-130.

¹³⁰ Wang & Li, 2011 (2008, 1984), p. 100.

¹³¹ Rhoads, 2000, p. 272.

¹³² Hall, 2009, p. 910.

¹³³ Han, 2004, p. 468.

¹³⁴ Gjerø, 2007, p. 144.

reversed, and teaching Manchu language was strictly prohibited altogether.¹³⁵ During the Manchukuo period, the situation improved slightly as education in Manchu was once again possible, but the availability of Manchu education rested solely on the private sponsorship of wealthier Manchus. Higher education conducted in Manchu language was non-existent.¹³⁶ Majority of Manchus, if schooled, went to schools that operated in Chinese. During the Manchukuo period the portion of children going to elementary school almost tripled from 13,5% in 1933 to 47,3% in 1940, but only 2 to 5 percent of these children advanced to middle school¹³⁷. Andrew Hall, who has researched textbooks used in Manchukuo and the policy on Japanese language education, describes that education bureaucracy in Manchukuo differed significantly from other Japanese colonies. Even before 1932, the SMRC applied a style of pedagogy considerably more modern than was prevalent in Japan. Individualism, critical thinking and creativity were promoted in teachers' training. This direction remained vital during the Manchukuo period. The first director of the Manchukuo Education General Affairs and School Affairs division Kamimura Tetsuya voiced in 1932 that "My hope is that education can be separated from propaganda, and become true education." Hall argues that until 1937, the major tendency in Manchukuo's education policy was gradualism, which emphasized the new state as an inheritor of Confucian values, martial tradition of the non-Han peoples of the north, and the long-standing friendship with Japan. According to gradualism, cultural assimilation was not enough to eliminate native identity. At the time the portion of Japanese language in education was relatively small. After 1937, however, gradualism was replaced by reform optimism. It supported the view that language has the power to change the person who learns it. Japanese officials in Manchukuo believed that learning Japanese was the most effective tool for cultivating loyalty among the subjected people. Japanese language was believed to have a sacred power, the so called *kotodama* (word spirit), that enabled Japanese words to play a role in the relationship between humans and spirits (*kami*). Learning Japanese, therefore, was deemed enough to civilize Manchurians and instill students with Japanese spirit. Belief in Japanese's power resulted in textbooks having relatively little propagandistic content when compared to Korea and Taiwan, where Japanese educators had operated with significantly harsher methods. However, the decade of liberal

¹³⁵ Shirokogoroff, 1924, p. 4.

¹³⁶ Shao, 2011, p. 148-149.

¹³⁷ Hall, 2009, p. 917.

education policies came gradually to its end in 1943 and education increasingly began to resemble the Japanese education centered around the emperor.¹³⁸

Although the role of Manchus was emphasized in Manchukuo's state ideologies, in practice Japanese designated both Han Chinese and Manchus in Manchuria with the common term "Manchurians", and Manchus did not enjoy any special status in the society that would have derived from their ethnicity¹³⁹. The hierarchical relationship between Manchus and Japanese is interestingly described in Michele Mason and Helen Lee's book *Reading colonial Japan, text, context and critique* (2012). Mason and Lee support the view that Japanese tolerated Manchus, but considered them barbarian in their habits and in need of education. Mason and Lee analyzed a diary written during the Manchukuo period by a Japanese lady who hired a Manchu girl as a servant, as the role of a Japanese woman as a good wife and wise mother included also taking care of less fortunate locals. The diary was later published to Japanese audience and presents a good example of the propaganda that aimed at raising goodwill between Japanese and Manchurians in the name of the "Harmony between the five races". According to the diary, during her service period the Manchu girl Guiyu started to be ashamed of her Manchuness and began to turn into a Japanese. But as Mason and Lee point out, the reason behind this phenomenon is hardly the appeal of Japanese culture, but rather the class status associated with modern lifestyle. Striving to become a Japanese was probably a desire to elevate one's class position and gain access to privileges. A similar story is recounted by Shao Dan; in Xinjing, a Manchurian orphan was adopted by a Japanese couple, received the Japanese name Emiko, and underwent decent Japanese education including skills such as social etiquette, handicrafts and other skills required of Japanese women. This story was likewise published in a newspaper to Japanese audience as "a bright example of Manchurian-Japanese love, which crosses ethnic boundaries".¹⁴⁰ Generally Manchus had antipathy towards Japanese, since their experience was that Japanese had always white rice to eat while many Manchus had to be content with coarse-grained sorghum or starvation.¹⁴¹ The phenomenon of elevating one's status by changing one's ethnic association is, as we have seen, a recurring event in the history of Manchus.

¹³⁸ Hall, 2009, p. 895-922.

¹³⁹ Tucker, 2006, p. 35.

¹⁴⁰ Shao, 2011, p. 135.

¹⁴¹ Mason & Lee, 2012, p. 211-234.

It can even be argued that Manchus, the name bearers of the new state, were the most unfortunate group in Manchukuo. Japanese occupiers were naturally the upper class with higher levels of education, income and positions. Koreans, on the other hand, were regarded as partly Japanized and therefore received slightly better treatment than local Manchurians. Mitter comments that the status of Koreans was interpreted flexibly by the Japanese; sometimes they were regarded as racially inferior, but at other times as citizens of the Japanese empire with the privileges that went along with that citizenship¹⁴². Han Chinese, who constituted the majority of residents in Manchukuo, benefited from Chinese (instead of Japanese or Manchu) being elected the national language. Japanese officials had to study Chinese, and Han Chinese had to be represented in high positions of government and business world. Furthermore, contributions were made to preserve Mongol heritage. The Manchukuo Government publicly emphasized the promotion of Mongol culture and uniqueness; a special administration for Mongols in Xing'an province, for example, surveyed Mongol customs and collected materials for writing Mongol history. Furthermore, Mongols' educational opportunities developed greatly under Japanese influence¹⁴³. Nakami Tatsuo reports that primary education was ensured throughout the Mongol population, and provisions were granted for Mongol youths to enter institutions of higher education both in Manchukuo and Japan¹⁴⁴. Mongols were even given judicial privileges, such as the right to hunt in forests. Soon after the establishment of the new state, Manchus were rarely mentioned. Perhaps there were fewer Manchus in Manchukuo than the Japanese expected, or possibly the Japanese occupiers could not differentiate between Manchus and Han Chinese. On the other hand, invigorating Manchu culture and activities would not have served Japanese political purposes.¹⁴⁵ The difference between the treatment of Manchus and Mongols was undoubtedly partly explained by Japan's fear of Soviet influence in Outer Mongolia. According to Nakami, Mongols believed that Japanese were there to help them, but in reality the Japanese did not have such goals in mind. Japanese presented themselves as revitalizers of the Mongols, but in reality nationalism in Mongolia was merely seen as a counterweight to China and Soviet Union. Regardless of actual intentions, Japanese presence in Manchukuo did influence Mongol

¹⁴² Mitter, 2003, p. 148-149. Tucker, 2006, p. 35.

¹⁴³ Li Narangoa & Cribb, 2003, p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ Nakami, 2003, p. 100-101.

¹⁴⁵ Han, 2004, p. 463-471.

consciousness. Nakami further argues that on the other hand, acknowledging Mongol history gave Mongols confidence, and on the other hand, trying to limit Mongol nationalism led Mongols to resist the Japanese and therefore strengthen their Mongol identity.¹⁴⁶ For Manchus, Manchukuo did not have such invigorating effect.

3.2.1. Deprived peasants and ex-bannermen

The life of frontier Manchus and Manchu ex-bannermen in Manchukuo was characterized by poverty caused by demolition of the clan properties during the Boxer Rebellion and other rampages that had taken place in the early 20th century, and the gradual cutting off the stipends in 1920's. According to Collier and Malone, in 1936 the main occupations in Manchukuo were divided between agriculture (70%), industry (12%) and commerce (8%).¹⁴⁷ It seems that Manchus in Manchukuo took part in a wide set of occupations, most of which, however, were quite plebeian in nature. Some frontier Manchus who had resided in Manchuria for a longer period of time had taken up agriculture as their livelihood already during the Qing Dynasty, since the meager stipends paid by the court were not enough to sustain them. Some Manchus, facing bankruptcy due to the fall of the Qing Dynasty, requested and received free farming land in faraway Manchurian locations from the ROC state in 1910's and 1920's; *The Strait Times* reported in 1915 that Manchus residing in Peking had signed a petition stating that their present means of livelihood are inadequate and requested that the president grant them waste land adjacent to the Imperial Mausolea in Liaoning and Jilin and also some undeveloped land in Huayuan and Chahar for tilling and cattle-rearing.¹⁴⁸ Many contemporary observations describe Manchus as less advanced in agriculture than their Han Chinese neighbours¹⁴⁹, but these descriptions probably refer mainly to the latter group of Manchus who took up farming at a relatively late period.

Besides agriculture, it seems probable that Japanese investments, which in their magnitude enraged even Japanese taxpayers themselves, reduced unemployment in Manchukuo, since construction works conducted all over the country required great volumes of manual labour. However, many sources report that while wages were higher

¹⁴⁶ Nakami, 2003, p. 100-103.

¹⁴⁷ Collier & Malone, 1936, p. 132.

¹⁴⁸ *The Strait Times*, 13.3.1915.

¹⁴⁹ see e.g. Hosie, 1980 (1904), p. 157-158.

in Manchukuo than in China Proper, they were still exceedingly low. Furthermore, Japanese received twice as high pay as Manchus and Chinese, which naturally caused dissatisfaction. Malone and Collier remarked wittily in 1936 that in Europe machines are installed to save the cost of labour, but in Manchukuo men are used to save the cost of machines¹⁵⁰. Construction work and continuously expanding infrastructure also resulted in increasing urbanisation, which allowed many unemployed Manchu bannermen and other destitute Manchus to work meager jobs in cities, for example as rickshaw pullers, porters, street vendors, water carriers, carriers of night soil, barbers, cobblers and even fortune tellers.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, especially during the latter part of Manchukuo, thousands of people were forced into labour¹⁵². There are, however, no trustworthy statistics on Manchus' unemployment rates.

Many contemporary observers noted that the three biggest social and domestic problems in Manchukuo were bandits, opium and epidemics¹⁵³. These very same problems played also prominent roles in Manchus' daily lives. Many were targeted by bandits or turned into banditry themselves, suffered from low hygiene that caused waves of epidemics, and were addicted to opium. Opium had been introduced to the area already during the Kangxi reign, and it became one of the top three agricultural products in the region by the end of the Qing Dynasty. Opium was sometimes banned, but without much result. During the Manchukuo period, Japanese saw intoxicants such as opium, heroin and morphine as an attractive source of revenue. For example doctor Morinaka, who worked at the Manchuria Medical College in Mukden, estimated in 1929 that about 25% to 50% of the prisoners in Manchuria's jails were drug users.¹⁵⁴

There is dispute whether the level of banditry rose or fell during the Manchukuo period. On the other hand, safety in cities, where Japanese influence was at its greatest, rose, but the countryside saw relatively more banditry than before. Firstly, the Japanese occupation in 1931 disbanded many local armies, which produced unemployed soldiers that often turned into banditry. Secondly, many impoverished bannermen saw banditry as the only viable livelihood. Thirdly, also local farmers whose property was devastated

¹⁵⁰ Collier & Malone, 1936, p. 132.

¹⁵¹ Collier & Malone, 1936, p. 141.

¹⁵² Han, 2004, p. 458.

¹⁵³ e.g. Simon, 1937, p. 114-118.

¹⁵⁴ Smith, 2012, p. 23-29.

by bandits turned into banditry themselves. Furthermore, banditry was an old custom in Manchuria. Japanese occupiers put substantial effort into extirpating the bandits, but according to some less reliable sources, they also sold weapons to bandits¹⁵⁵. On the other hand, however, banditry had a very romantic image to many individual Japanese, and some ex-army officers even became famous as bandit chiefs. Officially Japanese called anybody who opposed them a bandit,¹⁵⁶ and later during the PRC period these bandits that operated in Manchukuo were elevated to positions of national heroes for their anti-Japanese attitudes. In reality, however, it seems probable that banditry was motivated less by ideological and nationalistic purposes and more by practical questions of everyday livelihood.

SMRC founded many hospitals and research laboratories that were utilized to reduce the amount of plagues. Furthermore, in some areas Japanese officials and police conducted hygiene campaigns, which everybody had to take part in. However, all Manchurians, including the local Manchus, faced the improbable but nevertheless real risk of being captured by the Japanese police for trifling reasons and being shipped to infamous Japanese research facilities all over Manchukuo, such as Unit 731 near Harbin, which conducted research on chemical and biological warfare. It is unlikely that any of the locals used as test animals survived. It is widely rumoured that some of the leading Japanese researchers who worked in these facilities were pardoned by United States in the aftermath of WWII in exchange for granting their research results exclusively to the USA. Some suspect that modern knowledge on phenomena such as hypothermia is based on this information. Furthermore, Harris speculates that due to careless sewage and waste transport, Japanese research facilities also spread diseases into the surrounding areas.¹⁵⁷

Regardless of the grave economical and social problems which existed in Manchukuo, majority of contemporary observers supported the view that the situation in Manchukuo was, nevertheless, much better than in China Proper. As Collier and Malone pointed

¹⁵⁵ Hussey, 1933, p. 25-26.

¹⁵⁶ Flemings, 1936, p. 132. Collier & Malone, 1936, p. 110. Hussey, 1933, p. 25-27.

¹⁵⁷ Harris, 1998, p. 97.

out, the soil was richer, salaries and standard of living higher, and the amount of epidemics was lower than in China Proper.¹⁵⁸

3.2.2. Dreamers of restoration

The majority of Manchus who took part in Manchukuo on a political level were motivated by the wish to restore the Qing Dynasty and imperial era. These Qing-loyalist Manchus did not only include some members of the Aisin Gioro clan and other Manchus of high status, but also bannermen and, according to Shirokogoroff, local frontier Manchus likewise tended to dream about the restoration¹⁵⁹. Unfortunately, there is not much information on the political activities of bannermen and frontier Manchus. Therefore, this chapter concentrates on the members of the Aisin Gioro clan who operated in Manchukuo. The most prominent among them include Puyi, his brother Pujie, their cousin Xianyu and the distant relative and direct descendant of Nurhaci's brother Surhaci, Aisin Gioro Xiqia.

Aisin Gioro Xiqia (1884-1950) was the only Manchu who is known to have served as a Minister in the Government of Manchukuo. He graduated from Japanese Military Academy in 1911, after which he led a creditable military career in Manchuria. Before becoming a Minister, he acted as Counselor for the Kwantung Army, Commander of the 10th Brigade of Northeastern Army and Director of the Kirin Military School, to mention but a few of his titles. He was Manchukuo's Finance Minister from 1932 to 1934 and the Imperial Household Minister from 1935 to 1945.¹⁶⁰ There is very little research material on Xiqia; the information relayed here is based on an encyclopedia compiled by Kamesaka Tsunesaburo in 1943, *Who is Who in Japan with Manchukuo and China 1941-1942*. Xiqia is one of the few people who signed Manchukuo's declaration of independence.¹⁶¹ Puyi recounted in his autobiography that Xiqia co-operated with Japanese officials in establishing Manchukuo since the beginning. Puyi reminisced his first arrival and reception in Xinjing, where Xiqia pointed out dragon flags between the Japanese ones and said that those who are holding

¹⁵⁸ Collier & Malone, 1936, p. 132.

¹⁵⁹ Shirokogoroff, 1924, p. 148.

¹⁶⁰ Kamesaka, 1943, p. 345.

¹⁶¹ Manchukuo Government, 1932, p. 1-2.

them are Manchu bannermen who have been waiting for Puyi "to come home" for twenty years¹⁶².

Aisin Gioro Xianyu (1906-1948), also known by her Chinese name Jin Bihui and her Japanese name Yoshiko Kawashima, nicknamed "Manchukuo's Joan of Arc", has been presented by Shao Dan as an example of the grave identity crisis Manchus were victims of during the Manchukuo era¹⁶³. Xianyu was adopted by his father's friend Kawashima Naniwa when she was twelve years old. Xianyu inherited the Qing-restorationist ideas and was involved in the founding of Manchukuo in 1930's. She helped the empress flee from Tientsin to Manchuria, participated in Japanese military actions in Jehol, and with the help of her royal Manchu background befriended many powerful and famous Japanese and Chinese figures. She was arrested and charged with treason by the ROC. The oral and written confessions left behind relate a complex ethnic and national identity – she felt she was a Japanese with Chinese blood, but most of all a Manchu banner person.¹⁶⁴

However, the matter of Manchukuo did not receive unanimous approval from all Aisin Gioros. Puyi's little sister Puren recounted in a book "The latter generations of the Aisin Gioros" that their father, Prince Chun, was quite against Manchukuo and the Japanese presence there. According to Puren, their father visited Puyi with her three siblings in Xinjing, and during the visit Japanese officials offered Prince Chun a high position in Manchukuo, were he to come over. Instead of consenting, Prince Chun hurried back to Beijing¹⁶⁵. Also Li Shuxian pointed out later that Aisin Gioros rarely agreed on anything¹⁶⁶. On the other hand, both of these two accounts were written in the PRC, which makes it quite impossible that such accounts would have any pro-Manchukuo sentiments.

Likewise Aisin Gioros who at first had supported Manchukuo, soon saw that they had little influence in their new home. Japanese officials had explicit plans on how to manage affairs in Manchukuo, for example who would be the future emperor; Puyi was

¹⁶² Aisin Gioro, 2010 (1989, 1964), p. 254.

¹⁶³ see e.g. Shao, 2011.

¹⁶⁴ Shao, 2011, p. 221-226.

¹⁶⁵ Jiang & Sui, 1997, p. 44. Rhoads, 2000, p. 273.

¹⁶⁶ Wang & Li, 2011 (2008, 1984), p. 268.

repeatedly encouraged to take a Japanese wife, but since he refused, his brother Pujie finally consented. He married Saga Hiro in April 1937. Soon after, a law was passed which stated that in case the emperor did not have an heir, his brother or brother's child could take the throne.¹⁶⁷ The decision was especially sinister for the Aisin Gioros, since Puyi was known to be infertile, and the child of Pujie and Saga Hiro would have been considered Japanese.

During the Manchukuo period, many Manchus in both lower and higher positions saw Manchukuo as a tool to redeem the Qing Dynasty and Manchus' higher social status and quality of life associated with it. Japanese, with their advanced technology, were seen as a promising ally, since one of the reasons for Qing Dynasty's demise had indeed been the reluctance to modernize their society. However, there seems to be little evidence that Manchus were content with Manchukuo only. Although the area was considered the home of their ancestors, Peking had been the crux of Manchu empire for centuries. Unfortunately only few Manchus had influence in Manchukuo and therefore resources to redeem Peking. Manchus' position in Manchuria had declined for centuries and Japanese occupiers endeavoured to ensure local co-operation by maintaining the political situation that had existed in Manchuria before Manchukuo. Although Japanese occupiers aspired to legitimize the new state, this aspiration did not extend to replacing local Han Chinese power holders with Manchus, and this would indeed have been irrelevant, as Manchukuo was designed to be a multiethnic state from the beginning. Furthermore, Manchus' wish to restore the Qing Dynasty and the Japanese dream of conquering Asia were naturally in direct conflict. In the beginning of the Manchukuo period the Japanese occupiers voiced ostensible sympathies towards Manchus' wishes, but in reality they operated against realising such plans.

¹⁶⁷ Jiang & Sui, 1997, p. 26-27. Rhoads, 2000, p. 273.

3.3. Brief glimpse to contemporary Manchus

Once, when Premier Zhou Enlai invited Puyi, along with other chief guests, to a function, he introduced Puyi to the guests by saying, "This is the Emperor Xuantong of the Qing Dynasty." Puyi replied loudly, "Now, I'm a citizen of the People's Republic of China!" In front of everybody, Premier Zhou praised his wonderful answer!

Puyi's last wife Li Shuxian, 1984¹⁶⁸

The state of Manchukuo perished at the same time when Japan conceded defeat to the Allied Forces in 1945. As was agreed at the Tehran Conference in November 1943 and the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Soviet Union began its Manchurian invasion on 9th of August 1945, the same day as the atomic bombing of Nagasaki took place. After 1945, Manchuria provided a base of operations for the People's Liberation Army. Thereafter Soviet Union decided to hand over the area to newly founded People's Republic of China as a sign of goodwill between two communist nations. After the collapse of Manchukuo, Manchus who had co-operated with Japanese were prosecuted and either executed or sent into re-education camps. Some famous examples included Aisin Gioro Xianyu, who was condemned a traitor and received death penalty in 1948, and Aisin Gioro Puyi, who was sent into a sanatorium in Siberia in 1945 with his brother Pujie. He was repatriated to China in 1949, spent nine years in Fushun War Criminals Management Centre in Liaoning, and was finally declared "reformed" in 1959 and sent to Peking.¹⁶⁹ However, the Manchukuo period and its end had little impact on the frontier Manchus who dwelled in rural locations. An elderly Manchu woman interviewed by Shao Dan in Sanjiazhi (Heilongjiang) in 2000 recalled that she got married after the "Incident", but could not relate what the "Incident" actually meant. She knew that the Japanese had come to Manchuria, but she had never actually seen any Japanese soldiers. She recounted that outside influence did not reach their village until the PRC period, probably during the Cultural Revolution, when the use of Manchu language was forbidden.¹⁷⁰

According to Janhunén, Manchu language is on the verge of irreversible extinction. Speakers of Manchu exist today only in four locations: the villages of Siji and

¹⁶⁸ Wang & Li, 2011 (2008, 1984), p. 192.

¹⁶⁹ Rhoads, 2000, p. 273.

¹⁷⁰ Shao, 2011, p. 266-268.

Dawujiazi in Heihe region (Aihui), the village of Daxing in Tailai County, the village of Sanjiazi in Fuyu county and among the diaspora population of Sibe in Xinjiang, which is now classified as a separate minority language.¹⁷¹ The foundation for this unfortunate situation was laid already during the Qing Dynasty, when the Qing ruling elite failed to sustain the territorial integrity of the Manchu-speaking rural population that still inhabited some parts of Manchuria until the late Qing. Furthermore, ethnicity in the PRC is mainly a titular position given by the administrative authorities; due to the bureaucratic nature of regulating ethnicities, less attention is paid to the rate of retaining native languages as an ethnic indicator. Today Manchus, with population of about 10 million, are the third largest ethnic group in China, but according to Janhunen, this has little to do with any “true revigoration of the Manchu nationality, let alone its language.”¹⁷² In addition, especially Manchu males are ridden with alcoholism and the accidents, murders and suicides that go with it. This has caused a further decline in their position.¹⁷³ Manchus are also relatively less educated than other ethnicities in Manchuria today. According to statistics collected by Scharping, in 1990 approximately 1% of Manchus in Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang have graduated from university, 7,7% from Senior High, 27,3% from Junior High and 38,7% from Elementary School.¹⁷⁴

However, some researchers hold a more positive view on the Manchu situation. In his lecture “Reinventing the Manchus” Mark Elliot points out the Manchus’ paradoxical survival; how Manchus, earlier presumed to be sooner or later swallowed up by the Han Chinese majority, still survive today in such a large number. Undoubtedly, many registered themselves as Manchu especially since the 1980’s when the political climate was tolerant enough, and the incentives granted for ethnic minorities, such as omission from the one-child policy and better chances at entering a university, were attractive enough. Furthermore, registering oneself as a Manchu is relatively effortless since one does not have to comply with Stalinist description of “minority nationality” that the PRC originally followed; in other words territory, language, economy and ethnic self-consciousness. Instead proving banner identity or banner ancestry was relatively easy.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Janhunen, 1997, p. 126-127.

¹⁷² Janhunen, 1997, p. 136-137.

¹⁷³ Janhunen, 1997, p. 142.

¹⁷⁴ Scharping, 1998, p. 27.

¹⁷⁵ Elliot, 2001, p. 15 & 43.

There is little research information on how many Manchus re-registered for the advantageous policies and how many according to their true ethnic identity. It is certain that the majority of modern Manchus are descended from Han bannermen or the Hanjun. As Elliot commented the phenomenon, since 1980's "it was cool to be a national minority again."¹⁷⁶

Elliot's statement is supported by many other researchers and reports. Scharping pointed out in his 1998 article that scholarly interest towards Manchu language rose greatly since the 1980's in China especially among the Manchus. In 1981 80 scholars met in Shuangcheng county in Heilongjiang in order to study the Manchu language.¹⁷⁷ At the time only nine of them had good command of the language. Since then, many journals, research institutes and conferences have been founded in order to study Manchu language and culture.¹⁷⁸ For example, in the PRC the Society for Manchu Studies (Manzuxue yanjiu, 满族学研究) publishes a bimonthly journal of the same name. Manchu Association of Taipei, which brings together individuals of Manchu descent, was founded in 1981.¹⁷⁹ The popularity of Manchus has also risen among the common populace. *The Baltimore Sun* reported in 1995 that Manchu culture is making a comeback in a more tolerant China. In his interview, Zhao Zhan, a researcher at the Central University of Nationalities, says "My Manchu friends have started to ask me to give their children Manchu names ... Many others have re-registered as Manchu and no longer pretend that they are Chinese." A Manchu entrepreneur Bao Shiyi, an owner of a Manchu teahouse and a Manchu gift shop in the Forbidden City, says "Privately, I think the ten emperors of the Qing were versatile, capable, honest and clean. They conquered so much territory for China, like Tibet and Xinjiang ... Our emperors were better than the other dynasties".¹⁸⁰ It seems also that the increased scholarly attention paid to Manchus has increased their own awareness of the value of Manchu language and culture. *New York Times* reported in 2007 that only about 18 of the villagers in Sanjiazi speak Manchu, and most of them generally use Chinese both at home and outside. Meng Shujiang, at that time an 82-year-old widow, was determined to teach her grandson Manchu language and culture. In the *New York Times* interview, she says: "I don't even

¹⁷⁶ Elliot, 2012, lecture.

¹⁷⁷ Scharping, 1998, p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ Elliot, 2012, lecture.

¹⁷⁹ Rawski, 1996, p. 830.

¹⁸⁰ Johnson, 1995 (*The Baltimore Sun* 4.6.1995).

know if I have tomorrow, but I will use the time to teach my grandchildren ... It is our language; how can we let it die? We are the Manchu people.”¹⁸¹ However, it seems that Manchus who now reside in the PRC prefer not to discuss the Manchukuo issue, or consider it a mistake or a disappointment.

The first Manchu autonomous county was established in Xinbin in Northeast China in 1985. Since then, multiple Manchu autonomous counties have been approved by the PRC state.¹⁸² The foundation of autonomous Manchu areas took place relatively late on a comparatively small level. Majority of Manchus reside in Beijing, and naturally it is not possible to transform the capital into an autonomous zone.¹⁸³ However, the majority of the populace even in the Manchu autonomous counties is Han Chinese, and therefore, as Janhunen argues, the so-called autonomous zones do not offer a proper environment to increase minorities’ linguistic and ethnic independence through isolation.¹⁸⁴ On the other hand, legislation requires that autonomous counties reserved for certain ethnic minorities have to have a member of that ethnic minority in their municipal governments. Therefore granting the status of an autonomous county has at least some practical meaning.

One of the interesting peculiarities of the post-Qing Manchus’ history is that Manchus, albeit the Qing Dynasty fell in 1912 and was never to be redeemed, have until today been emblems of the past imperialism and feudalism. Manchus’ treatment has oftentimes depended on how each regime and government has regarded the Qing era itself. During the 1950’s and 1980’s a more tolerant period resulted in increases in Manchu population, while the 1960’s Cultural Revolution respectively saw a decline in Manchu numbers. The turbulent change in demographics is by no means dependent only on natural causes, but the amount of Manchus has always rather depended on whether or not it is beneficial to be a Manchu. Both Japanese occupiers in Manchukuo and the PRC politicians have tried to make use of the Manchus’ imperial origins. The Japanese had Puyi play the role of the Manchu emperor of Manchukuo in order to ensure the cooperation of the Qing-loyalists and legislate the new state by appealing to Manchus’ imperial origins and right for their ancient homeland. The PRC government

¹⁸¹ Lague, 2007 (New York Times 18.3.2007).

¹⁸² Shao, 2011, p. 2-3.

¹⁸³ Elliot, 2012, lecture.

¹⁸⁴ Janhunen, 1997, p. 136.

and its representatives, as the quote from Zhou Enlai in the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, had Puyi present himself as a reformed citizen in order to illustrate the benevolence of the new communist state to other Manchus and Qing-loyalists. Li Shuxian tells in her memories that Zhou Enlai encouraged Puyi to not only avoid being influenced by Qing-loyalists, but also to “help them with their ideological remoulding”¹⁸⁵. Puyi has indeed been a puppet for his whole life, and his case rather aptly represents Manchus’ inability to reorganize and revitalize their actions after the Qing Dynasty.

¹⁸⁵ Wang & Li, 2011 (2008, 1984), p. 118.

4. Manchus and the conceptual problemacy

A consensus is growing among some scholars that even if the Manchus were acculturated and ruled in part as Chinese, there always remained something palpably "different" about them, or at least the perception of something different. The problem is, of course, how to define that "something."

Mark C. Elliot, 2001.¹⁸⁶

This chapter analyzes the conceptual problemacy that surrounds Manchus. Latest scholarly debate which has taken place in some selected works written by the most prominent representatives of the New Qing School, such as Pamela Kyle Crossley and Mark C. Elliot, has been endeavoured to be taken into consideration. Since 1990's concepts such as sinicization, ethnic group and ethnicity have generated multiple fascinating arguments that differ considerably from earlier attitudes. As Elliot describes the situation, late 20th century intellectual climate has encouraged scholars to question the earlier hegemonized histories¹⁸⁷. Crossley goes even further in her pointed remark on the pre-1990's scholarship on Manchus as "hopelessly vague and unapologetically stamped with the prejudices and assumptions of Chinese nationalist scholarship."¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, one can not understate how ambiguous the concept of "Manchu" itself is. Several scholars have attempted to reach a conclusion on who Manchus actually were. This Master's Thesis focuses especially on the concepts used in English literature; considering Chinese terms such as *shaoshuminzu* (少数民族) among others would demand yet another Master's Thesis; as Crossley points out, *shaoshuminzu* is often considered to be synonymous with the term "ethnic minority", but such conclusion "leaves us dissatisfied with our ability to be precise about China's social and cultural experience".¹⁸⁹ In any case, *shaoshuminzu* is a modern concept used on an administrative basis today and is therefore not relevant in the case of Manchus in Manchukuo.

¹⁸⁶ Elliot, 2001, p. 32.

¹⁸⁷ Elliot, 2001, p. 32.

¹⁸⁸ Crossley, 1990b, p. ix.

¹⁸⁹ Crossley, 1990a, p. 21.

4.1. Criticism on sinicization

The concept of sinicization has been a persistent tendency in research on Manchus until 1990's and is still used by many scholars without due criticism. Pei Huang recognizes two phases of sinicization in the Manchu history. The first was the pre-conquest phase of Jurchens' contact with Han Chinese in Liaodong through geographical, economic, political and social channels. The second was the conquest phase during which contact with Han Chinese became easier, broader and deeper than before.¹⁹⁰ Janhunen remarks that surrounding ethnicities have always tended to be assimilated by the Han Chinese center¹⁹¹, and this is certainly true in many respects. As Elliot points out, Chinese civilization has fascinated all those who have encountered it. All the major cultures in East Asia have been influenced by the Chinese. During the Qing Dynasty, Manchus adopted the framework for the government from the earlier Ming Dynasty, and spoke and wrote Chinese better than Manchu.¹⁹² Until the end of the Manchukuo period, the rural areas in Heilongjiang were perhaps the most successful in avoiding the clutches of sinicization, but altogether Manchus who dwelled in larger cities and in South Manchukuo did not seemingly differ much from their Han Chinese neighbours. The Kwantung Army and the SMRC did not adopt such strong Japanization measures as Japanese occupiers had done in Korea and Taiwan, and therefore the cultural situation in Manchukuo was, to a great extent, a continuation of the earlier regimes of Zhang Zuolin and Zhang Xueliang. The assumption that Chinese have always assimilated their Inner Asian conquerors simply by their extended residence in China is the basic idea that the so called Sinicization School supports. However, this argument does more to obscure than to illuminate the complex nature of acculturation.¹⁹³

Elliot argues that the basis for sinocentric support for sinicization lies in the ethnocentric assumptions of the unparalleled values that defined the Chinese people and, therefore, civilization itself. The division between Chinese and barbarians was outlined by Chinese scholars already before the Qin Dynasty. This ideology survived until the Qing Dynasty.¹⁹⁴ A document from the Taiping Rebellion period states: "We have

¹⁹⁰ Huang, 2011, p. 2-3.

¹⁹¹ Janhunen, 1997, p. 135.

¹⁹² Elliot, 2001, p. 27.

¹⁹³ Elliot, 2001, p. 29.

¹⁹⁴ Elliot, 2001, p. 23-24.

carefully investigated the Manchus' Tartar origins and have found that their first ancestor was a crossbreed of a white fox and a red dog, from whom sprang this race of demons."¹⁹⁵ According to some Han Chinese during the ROC period, the Manchus' barbarian origins offered a reason for their failure to defend the dynasty from Western imperialism. However, this narrative of barbarianism did not offer a satisfactory explanation on why Manchus succeeded in ruling China for such a long time. The narrative of sinicization, on the other hand, explained that Manchus ruled China for 260 years only thanks to the sinicization process; in other words, a civilization process. The amalgamation of the narratives of barbarianism and sinicization bears contradictions that tell more about the historians and revolutionists themselves than Manchus. As Elliot described the early 20th century situation, due to the sinicization model "the shameful fact of China's long domination by so-called foreigners was thereby solved, and the Manchu conquest of China neatly reinterpreted as the Chinese conquest of the Manchus."¹⁹⁶ This further fuelled, as discussed before, the notion of Manchuria being annexed to China by Manchus rather than China being annexed to the Manchu dynasty.

Western researchers have likewise adopted the narrative of sinicization. This is partly the result of a focus on Chinese-language material and the neglect of Manchu-language material. The criticism of sinicization gained momentum only when the archives on the issue were made public in 1980's. Elliot, who has made use of these archives, reports that Manchu-language documents compose approximately one fifth of the Qing archives, most of which are stored in the First Historical Archives in Beijing, totalling about 2 million articles. Earlier scholars assumed that all Qing government documentation was produced simultaneously in Chinese and in Manchu, and therefore reading the Chinese version was deemed sufficient. Only three decades ago it was discovered that some Manchu versions are complete while Chinese versions had been censored.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, according to Crossley, Manchu language retained its military value as a secret code for communication between the court and the field even at the brink of the language's extinction¹⁹⁸. Therefore the discovery of the existence of unique Manchu language documents is altogether quite expectable¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁵ Michael, 1971, p. 145-147.

¹⁹⁶ Elliot, 2001, p. 22-27.

¹⁹⁷ Elliot, 2001, p. xv-xvi & 32. Crossley, 1997, p. 10-11.

¹⁹⁸ Crossley, 1997, p. 84.

¹⁹⁹ Rawski, 1996, p. 829.

The insistence on sinicization has fundamentally shaped the research on Manchus until today. However, as Elliot argues, one has to consider what such hegemonized history has left untold. Granted that Manchus were acculturated, they were never assimilated into the Chinese society during the Qing Dynasty. First of all, adopting Chinese institutions did not mean becoming Chinese, and a shift in one's cultural practices does not necessarily mean a shift in one's self-perception. Secondly, the concept of sinicization obscures what "Chinese" has meant through centuries. Furthermore, also Han Chinese were "Manchuicized". Acculturation was by no means a one-way street; for example the Peking dialect of Mandarin Chinese still bears some characteristics lent from Manchu language. Thirdly, the sinicization process does not explain how Manchus, a minority in the face of the staggering Han Chinese majority, managed to rule China for such a long period of time.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, as Elliot argues, the notion of Manchus having assimilated and lost their indigenous identity implies the existence of an objective, unchanging standard of "Manchuness"²⁰¹. As discussed in chapter 2.1., the Manchu ruling elite did try to create such a uniform definition and apply it in practice, but this was mainly a fruitless effort. Secondly, Elliot continues, the concept of sinicization creates an equation between cultural performance and ethnic self-identification, and implies the false dichotomy that one should be either a Manchu or a Chinese²⁰². However, as we have seen throughout the course of this Master's Thesis, the boundaries between Manchus and other groups has never been so rigid. During the Qing Dynasty and in today's PRC, many Han Chinese have furthered their social standing by joining the ranks of Manchus. Likewise, after the Qing Dynasty and during the upheavals of Cultural Revolution, Manchus aspired to elevate their position by becoming Han Chinese, Mongols or, as in the case of Manchukuo, even Japanese.

4.2. Ethnic group or ethnicity?

The concepts of "ethnic group" and "ethnicity" are oftentimes used as synonyms, but in order to clarify the development of anthropological history these concepts are separated. In this Master's Thesis, the concept of "ethnic group" denotes the static and traditional

²⁰⁰ Elliot, 2001, p. 28.

²⁰¹ Elliot, 2001, p. 16.

²⁰² Elliot, 2001, p. 16.

impression that prevailed in research especially before 1970's and according to which an ethnic group is defined by a collective language, culture and geographical location. The concept of sinicization is essentially based on such static composition of ethnic groups. The concept of "ethnicity", on the other hand, implies the modern understanding that highlights the importance of individuals' self-perception as the foundation for ethnicity, rather than any external characteristics shared by a certain group of people.

Traditionally ethnic groups are defined as having shared beliefs, values, habits, customs and norms, and a common language, religion, history, geography or kinship. Ethnic groups oftentimes have a collective name, belief in common descent and a sense of solidarity; first and foremost, the members of an ethnic group have similar features, while at least some features between that ethnic group and others are dissimilar. The argument for sinicization is fundamentally based on such static version of ethnic groups' characteristics.

Some Manchus certainly have some of the aforementioned qualities, the name "Manchu" at the very least. Rhoads argues that the so-called pre-conquest Old Manchus had the racial, linguistic, and cultural homogeneity of an ethnic group, but later New Manchus who had arranged into banners constituted a multiethnic corporation that had ceased to be such a uniform group of people²⁰³. Especially Jurchens who predated and later created Manchus can be considered an ethnic group in a traditional sense, but generally speaking defining Manchus themselves as an ethnic group is indeed very problematic. During the Qing Dynasty those who considered themselves Manchus were a large and widely scattered group of people who excelled in adjusting to different environments and integrating into cultures that prevailed in their location. Conditions varied from garrison to garrison, but in general Manchu bannermen learned to speak local dialects, adopted local values and appreciated local history²⁰⁴. In the first place, Manchus were an invention devised by Hong Taiji and other members of the ruling elite, created in order to unify a miscellaneous set of clans, tribes and ethnicities under a single name. Elliot argues, however, that inventing an ethnic group is itself not testimony against its indigenoussness, but rather a practice that is more common than is

²⁰³ Rhoads, 2000, p. 290.

²⁰⁴ Crossley, 1990b, p. 6-7. Crossley, 1997, p. 84.

generally acknowledged²⁰⁵. Nevertheless, the core problem is that Manchus commenced to conquer the Ming Dynasty long before they would have naturally arranged into a single ethnic group. Instead, since the founding of the Eight Banners, Manchus were a heterogeneous, culturally and linguistically disunited people. Regardless of the effort the Qing ruling elite invested in creating a unified Manchu culture and history that all Manchus should imbibe, the results were decidedly poor as Manchus all over China and Manchuria carried on having their own ideas of what being a Manchu meant. During the Qing Dynasty in China Proper, being a Manchu had, most of all, certain royal symbolic value, and it ensured meager governmental stipends that composed the main source of livelihood for many impoverished Manchus.

Pamela Kyle Crossley has solved the problem by pointing out that all Manchus, despite their heterogeneity and the so-called sinicization or acculturation, share the same ethnic identity and therefore form an ethnicity²⁰⁶. This line of thought is based on Fredrik Barth's definition of ethnicity. According to Barth, ethnicity exists when a group of people claim a certain ethnic identity for themselves and are defined by others as having that identity. According to Barth's boundary maintenance theory, it is not important who ethnicities include, but how it is determined whom they include and exclude.²⁰⁷ Also Richard Ashmore et al. points out that of all the dimensions that constitute an ethnic identity, self-categorization is the most significant. Measurement of ethnic identity, according to Ashmore and others, must always begin with verifying that the individuals being studied do in fact self-identify as members of a particular group²⁰⁸. Rigger further emphasizes that Manchus, like many other communities that have been labeled an ethnic group, cannot be assigned a consistent and unitary history or identity.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Phinney and Ong argue that for clarity, ethnic behaviour, such as language, should be considered separate from ethnic identity.²¹⁰ Therefore for example language retaining rate does not directly correlate with the prosperity, or lack thereof, of Manchu society.

²⁰⁵ Elliot, 2013, lecture.

²⁰⁶ e.g. Crossley, 1990, p. 6-10.

²⁰⁷ Shao, 2011, p. 8.

²⁰⁸ Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004. Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 272.

²⁰⁹ Rigger, 1995, p. 186

²¹⁰ Phinney & Ong, 2007, p. 272.

However, Crossley and Elliot disagree on how and when Manchus actually constituted an ethnicity. Crossley, who Elliot calls a revisionist, argues that Manchus reached a sense of ethnicity only after 19th century when Manchus began to confront ethnic tensions during the Taiping Rebellion, Opium Wars and finally the Republican Revolution in 1911-1912 and its aftermath. Originally Manchu ethnic identity was weak, but gradually strengthened over time in spite of acculturation.²¹¹ In other words, the dissipation of the Old Manchus as an ethnic group, as described by Rhoads, and the flourishing of the New Manchus as an ethnicity happened gradually and simultaneously, and these two occurrences were not in actual conflict. Elliot, nominating himself a neotraditionalist, objects and asserts that Manchu ethnicity did exist already before the 19th century; founding and maintaining the Qing Empire, according to Elliot, was based essentially on ethnic separation between Manchus and Han Chinese.²¹² However, Crossley and Elliot agree on Manchus' difference having mattered throughout the Qing Dynasty, and Manchus never having assimilated or absorbed by the Han Chinese majority²¹³.

In summary, the main difference between an ethnic group and an ethnicity is that members of an ethnic group share certain characteristics that also separate them from other groups, while ethnicity is a broader idea of belonging to a certain group that can be also very heterogenous. However, ethnic identity is generally considered to be something that develops through time and can not be totally disregarded or changed on a whim. Yet since the invention of the name "Manchu", Manchus have gone through phases of inclusion and exclusion that do not necessarily depend on one's identity. These exclusion and inclusion policies were administered by whichever government was ruling at the time. In the 16th and early 17th centuries, the Qing ruling elite decreed that Manchus were an inclusive group to which one could enter by joining the banners; all bannermen and those loyal to the Aisin Gioros were considered Manchus. This policy enlarged the Manchu armed forces greatly during the conquest of the Ming Dynasty. However, in the 17th and 18th centuries during the Kangxi and Qianlong reigns this policy was changed into exclusiveness; in order to be a Manchu, one had to prove his ancestry back to the Jianzhou Federation. This function was aimed at

²¹¹ Crossley, 1990, p. 6.

²¹² Elliot, 2001, p. 33-34.

²¹³ Elliot, 2001, p. 34.

homogenizing the Manchu population. Uplifting one's social status by becoming a Manchu, however, was still possible by intermarriage, which allowed especially many Han Chinese women to influence their Manchu children culturally and linguistically. For example, although the emperor was expected to marry a Manchu lady, it was acceptable to have Han Chinese concubines, and the mothers of many Manchu emperors were in fact Han Chinese. After the Qing Dynasty, however, Manchus were persecuted and many decided to take Chinese identities. Manchus being treated symbols of the imperial and feudal era induced certain kind of treatment; the PRC government regarded Manchus wearily at first, and did not grant them the status of an ethnic minority in the first 1949 CPC meeting, and neither were Manchus present there. However, the status was granted in the 1952 meeting when CPC arrived to a resolution that Manchus had a fairly strong ethnic sense. As a result, the population of Manchus rose greatly²¹⁴. However, during the Cultural Revolution Manchus were persecuted once again. The situation did not greatly improve before the more open atmosphere of the 1980's, when the status of Manchus rose once again; Zhou Enlai's remark on the importance of Manchus in Chinese history and the correlation between the Qing state and PRC made Manchus feel proud of their Manchuness once more.²¹⁵ The rotation of these disadvantageous and beneficial periods has therefore had a substantial effect on Manchu population and its structure. Since the fall of the Qing Dynasty, the amount of Manchus has, therefore, depended on the one hand on how beneficial or disadvantageous it is to be a Manchu, and on the other hand, how ethnicities were defined by the ruling government or hegemon, whether it was the government of the ROC, Manchukuo or PRC, or the Japanese occupiers in Manchuria.

4.3. An institution?

On the whole, discussion on ethnic groups and ethnicities has spurred the publication of innumerable debates, and it is not possible to expound each of them here. Instead, this Master's Thesis pursues to create a new viewpoint to enlighten the complexity of Manchus' organization. I argue that the concept of institution brings forward some aspects to Manchus that concepts of sinicization, ethnic group or even ethnicity fail to

²¹⁴ see e.g. Rhoads, 2000, p. 282.

²¹⁵ Elliot, lecture 2012.

take into account sufficiently. Two institution theories introduced by Sasada Hironori are applied: the power-based rationalist theory and the collective action theory²¹⁶.

According to the power-based rationalist theory devised by Jack Knight, institutions are formed by political leaders who attempt to create strategic advantages with relation to other actors²¹⁷. Knight supports the view that in order to rational actors to take part in creating institutions, self-serving benefits must exceed the costs of doing so²¹⁸. Sasada further summarizes the power-based rationalist theory as thus: "Institutional arrangements reflect the power balance among actors. Powerful actors build institutions to secure or further increase their power. The institutions continue to exist as long as the given power structure remains unchanged."²¹⁹ According to the collective action theory by Barry Weingast, actors build institutions to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes²²⁰. Institutions enforce exchange and cooperation that is in the interests of the actors involved. Sasada outlines the collective action theory as follows: "Actors build institutions to overcome collective action problems and achieve mutual benefits. The institutions continue to exist as long as they perform such function and advance actor interests."²²¹

Manchus, in this sense, bear the very characteristics of an institution. In accordance with the power-based rationalist theory, Nurhaci and his heir Hong Taiji founded the Manchu institution in order to consolidate and increase their power, and create strategic advantages against the Ming Empire. As mentioned before, Nurhaci created the Eight Banners, the new basis for Manchu organization that replaced the original Manchu clan organization, and appointed his relatives to lead these banners. In other words, certain political situation produced formation of ethnic and social relations rather than the other way around. Later Aisin Gioros created the mythology in which they had a central place among Manchus. Aisin Gioros continued the effort to build and strengthen their institution by devising a collective Manchu culture, although this project was, to a large extent, a failure. As Christiaan Klieger points out, Manchus remained a political cadre

²¹⁶ Sasada, 2012, p. 6-7

²¹⁷ Knight, 1992.

²¹⁸ Knight, 1992, p. 43.

²¹⁹ Sasada, 2012, p. 8

²²⁰ Weingast, 2002 (1983).

²²¹ Sasada, 2012, p. 6-8

rather than a culture-and-language-based ethnic group until the end of the Qing Dynasty²²². In addition, the rise of Confucianism replaced the original Manchu autocracy, and decision-making was centralized to fewer people than before. Most important of all, the qualifications for being and becoming a Manchu were decided by the Qing ruling elite. During the 17th century Manchus were an inclusive group whose membership anyone loyal to Aisin Gioros could attain. Later, the Qing ruling elite decided that more emphasis should be put on ancestry, and therefore Manchus became an exclusive and smaller group of people. This smaller group, however, continued not to have unified culture; for example the portion of those Manchus able to speak Manchu language continued to dwindle.

As mentioned before, Elliot argues that in order to ensure their secure grip of China Proper, Manchus did not only need to adopt the Confucian traditions from earlier Ming Dynasty in order to legitimise their rule, but also maintain the segregation between conquering minority over conquered majority. Elliot continues that similar means of control through ethnic differentiation have been used by numerous other groups such as Normans in England, Mongols in Russia, British in India, Turks in Byzantium and Afrikaners in South Africa.²²³ Therefore the ethnic uniformity of Manchus did not only have symbolic value but also practical meaning in governing China Proper. For example the looming disappearance of Manchu language did not worry the Qing ruling elite only for its cultural value, but Manchu language had also military significance as a secret code of communication.

In accordance with the collective action theory, Manchus were also an institution whose members were united by a common goal. Overthrowing the Ming Dynasty and establishing and extending the Qing Dynasty had benefits that could be attained by becoming a Manchu. These mutual benefits included a better status and increase in wealth. The situation was comparable to earlier Jurchen Jin Dynasty where, as Peter Bol argues, power and privilege were distributed, most of all, along ethnic lines. Accepting other criteria for the allotment for such benefits would have threatened the status of the Jurchen elite.²²⁴ As Crossley points out, the Jianzhou Federation was falling apart

²²² Klieger 2006, p. 216

²²³ Elliot, 2001, p. 7-13.

²²⁴ Bol, 1987, p. 485.

because of economical problems and Ming raiders.²²⁵ In order to unify the Jurchens and prevent them from disbanding, Nurhaci had to declare war against the Ming. However, after the Qing Dynasty being a Manchu was increasingly less lucrative and therefore many disregarded their Manchu affiliation and decided to assume Han Chinese or Mongol identities.

The reason why Manchus were such an invisible group in Manchukuo is not merely caused by cultural and linguistical acculturation because, as discussed above, Manchu ethnic identity was not dependent on uniform cultural and linguistical behaviour. Instead, the failure to form and maintain the Manchu institution resulted in Manchus being perhaps the most neglected group of people in Manchukuo. The Manchu leaders did not have the resources to form a power-based institution despite their anxious will to redeem the Qing Dynasty. On the other hand, it was not particularly beneficial to be a Manchu, whereupon forming an institution based on collective action was likewise improbable. There are many reasons to this. Firstly, both the Japanese in Manchukuo and the Chinese in the ROC were against the potential strengthening of the Manchu institution; Manchus continued to be symbols of the imperial era, and had succeeded in conquering the China Proper before. In a worst-case scenario, they might do it again, something both the Chinese and Japanese opposed to their own ends. Therefore the weakened and scattered state of Manchus was beneficial for all major actors involved in the Manchukuo issue. In Manchukuo, other ethnicities that belonged to the collection of “Harmony between the five races” were supported to some degree, but Manchus did not enjoy any privileges resulting from their ethnicity. Especially in Heilongjiang, many Manchus succeeded in maintaining some form of their older culture, but the Manchukuo government did not invest in supporting Manchu heritage, for example arranging education in Manchu language, on any level. The social status of Manchus in Manchukuo was not particularly good, but neither did it get worse from the ROC period.

Furthermore, the decomposition of the Manchu institution started already during the Qing Dynasty; the existence of an institution based on collective action depended on constant conquest and expansion of the Qing state, and the spoils of war that followed.

²²⁵ Crossley, 1997, p. 69

However, as the enlargement of the Qing state halted, also the Manchu bannermen gradually lost their purpose and became unemployed. Manchus had always been hierarchical when it comes to family and clan relations, but during the Qing Dynasty inequality and differences in income between Manchus increased to a level beyond what they had ever been during the Ming Dynasty. Being a Manchu had merely some royal significance and it ensured the subsidies paid by the Qing government. However, these subsidies became increasingly meager. When the Qing state fell, subsidies were cut and Manchus became objects of fervent persecution. Manchus as an institution, based on both collective action and power, was diminished – a situation that did not markedly improve until 1950's when being a Manchu had once again more benefits than disadvantages. One should note that the amount of Manchus and their social status has never necessarily correlated with the survival rate of so-called indigenous Manchu culture and language. Today, only few speak Manchu language, including the faraway villages in Northeast China. Regardless of this unfortunate situation, Manchus fare better than they have for decades.

All things considered, it seems that forming and maintaining the Manchu institution in a successful fashion was dependent on both the power-based and collective action model, the relations of which varied through time. Today, Manchus can be considered mainly an institution based on collective action, since being a Manchu in PRC ensures some social benefits, and is also an expression of recuperating Manchu identity. I emphasize that Manchus can be discussed by using a wide array of concepts, such as an “ethnic group”, “ethnicity” or “institution”, but one should remember that Manchus are, by no means, a very consistent group, and each term indicates different aspects of Manchus.

5. Conclusions

“满族是一个进步很快，变化很大的民族，所以，
满族的风俗习惯随着历史的发展而发生着变化。”

Miao Zuoqi, 1990²²⁶

Manchus and Manchukuo were both complex historical entities, both of which initially were artificial constructs commenced in order to pursue certain political and economical goals. This, and the sinocentric focus on research, has resulted in ambiguous and subjective concepts such as “puppet state” and “sinicization”, which, however, do not clarify the multifaceted characters of these phenomena. In this Master’s Thesis I have endeavoured to bring forward some criticism that has taken place on these concepts since 1980’s, and discuss Manchus in Manchukuo from this new critical point of view that aims at questioning earlier hegemonized histories.

The Manchukuo period was an era of both geographical and political dispersion for Manchus, the causes of which can be traced to the onset of Qing Dynasty. Since the earliest times, Manchus were a heterogenous group united by a common political agenda rather than by shared characteristics such as culture and language, which have been considered the basis for ethnic group formation especially before 1970’s. During the Qing Dynasty, several policies were enforced to create a common Manchu culture and history, but these projects failed to have an effect on normal Manchu life; instead, Manchus excelled in adjusting to the environments that surrounded their banner garrisons all over the Qing Empire. Moreover, during the Qing Dynasty the inequality and differences in living standards continuously increased. The Qing-dynasty Manchus divided prominently into three groups; the frontier Manchus in Manchuria, the bannermen Manchus in garrisons, and the Qing ruling elite in Beijing - mainly the Aisin Gioro clan. This division persisted, on some level, also during the ROC and Manchukuo periods, although the banner system and stipends paid to bannermen were gradually abolished.

²²⁶ Miao, 1990, p. 392.

Furthermore, at the end of the Qing Dynasty Manchus were persecuted and massacred in great numbers. Many discarded their Manchuness and took up Chinese names. At first, the idea of Manchukuo and the chance to re-establish the Qing Dynasty and Manchu dignity through Manchuria fascinated many Qing-loyalists ranging from several Aisin Gioros to frontier Manchus. However, they soon discovered that they had little influence in the new state that bore their name. Manchuria had been an arena of international contest for centuries, which resulted in staggering Han Chinese majority of the population especially since the 19th century, and strong Russian and Japanese military, industrial and economical presence. The Open Door Policy and incapacity to fend off foreign influence further increased Manchuria's international disposition. Japan gradually invaded the area, and with the co-operation of local power-holders and members of Qing ruling elite founded the state of Manchukuo in 1932. Manchukuo was an multinational and multiethnic state construction project in which Japan invested generously, at the same time guaranteeing its own economical privileges. However, designating Manchukuo merely as Japan's puppet state belittles its complexity and the role of local power-holders in governing it. These local power-holders, however, were mainly Han Chinese landowners who had held the highest political positions in Manchuria already before Manchukuo. In order to ensure local co-operation, Japanese considered it important to adapt to local political structures on some level, a strategy quite different from what they used in Korea and Taiwan. This state of affairs, however, left Manchus a rather nominal role in Manchukuo; Puyi as the Chief Executive and Emperor of Manchukuo had mainly a representative role, and the role of Manchus was highlighted only in propaganda that aimed at legitimating Manchukuo and Japanese presence there to Manchurians, Japanese and foreigners alike during the onset of Manchukuo's establishment. At the same time, it can be argued that the small number of Manchus in important positions in Manchukuo was not only a result of Japanese oppression and propaganda, but also a continuation of the situation before Manchukuo. For example Aisin Gioro Xiqia had held formidable military positions in Manchuria before becoming a Minister in Manchukuo Government. Compared to other Japanese colonies, the political situation in Manchukuo was exceedingly liberal.

Yet Manchukuo was not insignificant to Manchus both in Manchukuo and Manchuria. The existence of Manchukuo had mainly negative consequences to Manchus who continued to reside in China Proper; they were oftentimes alleged to have sympathy

with Manchukuo, which made them enemies of the ROC state²²⁷. Manchus in Manchukuo, however, generally led more stable and prosperous lives. Partly due to Japanese presence and development projects, the citizens of Manchukuo enjoyed a higher standard of living in means of hygiene, safety, salaries and education. On the other hand, the Boxer Rebellion and the fall of the Qing Dynasty still had effects on Manchus in Manchukuo; many were impoverished and unemployed or worked humble jobs. Moreover, the difference between modern Manchukuo cities and the rural countryside was substantial. According to both Japanese and Chinese statistics, the number of Manchus in Manchukuo did not increase during the Manchukuo period. One can deduct that being a Manchu in Manchukuo was neither especially advantageous nor disadvantageous, and neither did any “common Manchu consciousness” flourish on any successful level at the time. Unlike Mongol tradition, Manchu culture and language was not promoted by the Manchukuo Government or Japanese officials. Moreover, Japanese labelled Manchus and Han Chinese with the common term “Manchurians”, which furthermore undermined the separateness and highlighted the closeness of these groups – a fact that was indeed quite obvious especially in South Manchukuo. The majority of the Manchus who did differ from Han Chinese to a greater level habited rural areas in North Manchukuo, and many of them never even saw a Japanese person.

During the earlier half of 20th century, Manchus in Manchuria underwent constant changes in regime, which resulted in an identity crisis, a progression meticulously researched by Shao Dan in her study *Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland* (2011). In this thesis I have aimed to continue from where Shao Dan left off, and discuss the conceptual problematics that surround Manchus. Manchus are often designated as an ethnic group or ethnicity, which, however, undermines the political agenda they were originally founded on. Manchus did not share ubiquitous characteristics such as language and culture, but were heterogenous and adaptable, and therefore calling them an ethnic group is problematic. As Miao Zuoqi wrote in 1990, “Manchus are an ethnicity which has developed quickly and changed greatly over time. In other words, the Manchu habits and customs have continuously adjusted to historical developments and events that have taken place.” It can be further defined that “Manchuness” has differed not only on a linear historical sense, but also horizontally in a geographical

²²⁷ e.g. Shao, 2011, p. 158.

sense. There simply is no static “Manchu essence” that would have survived through centuries. Instead considering Manchus an ethnicity in the sense that they shared a common ethnic identity, takes into account their evident diversity – Manchus were Manchus because they self-identified themselves in this fashion. However, this point of view is otherwise problematic; since the earliest times, the ruling elite has defined Manchus from the outside, and on the other hand Manchus themselves changed ethnic affiliation quite easily according to their circumstances and needs. Requirements for receiving the status of Manchu have changed through history; during the Qing Dynasty one could better his social position by becoming a Manchu. Likewise, after the fall of the Qing Dynasty, Manchus could increase their chances of survival by becoming Han Chinese, Mongols or even Japanese – an adjustment that was quite easy due to cultural and linguistical proximity.

The dispersion of Manchus in Manchukuo can be partly explained by the identity crisis that Manchus in Manchuria underwent in the earlier half of 20th century, but I argue that the failure to form a proper Manchu institution likewise incapacitated Manchus as political actors in Manchukuo. Since it was not evidently beneficial to be a Manchu, not many decided to redeem their Manchu status even though Manchus in Manchuria were not that heavily persecuted after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in the first place, and although Manchus in Manchukuo led quite stable lives. Therefore, Manchu institution based on collective action was quite weak. Likewise, Manchu leaders were unable to unify the miscellaneous Manchus in Manchuria in the same fashion their ancestors did in the 16th century. This was possibly not even a viable option for them, since the Han Chinese Army of Green Standard and Han Chinese or Hanjun officials had replaced Manchus as soldiers and officials already during the Qing Dynasty. Instead, Puyi and some other members of the Qing ruling elite seemed to believe that Japan with its advantageous technology and modernized ideas could help redeem the Qing Dynasty. This, however, was never in the Japanese plans. Instead, both Japanese and the Chinese in China Proper were against the potential increase of Manchu nationalism that could have endangered their own dominion in China Proper. Manchuria’s infamous (or famous) historical role as the starting point for the invasion of China Proper from one century to another undoubtedly increased international interest towards its strategical position. Therefore, a Manchu power-based institution was similarly not possible in Manchukuo.

Manchus and Manchukuo are both complicated topics of research, and this Master's Thesis can be but a very generic introduction to this intriguing theme. However, I have hoped to point out that the concepts of puppet state, sinicization, ethnic group and ethnicity have somewhat diverted earlier research in a fashion that has even resulted in ignoring Manchus in Manchukuo altogether. Since this topic still invokes strong nationalist feelings in many East Asian scholars, the objective standpoint of a non-East Asian researcher is vital. Therefore further research based on archival material and interviews is recommended to take place in the near future.

List of Abbreviations

CPC = Communist Party of China

KMT = Kuomintang

LN = The League of Nations

ROC = Republic of China

PRC = People's Republic of China

SMRC = South Manchurian Railway Company

WWII = The Second World War

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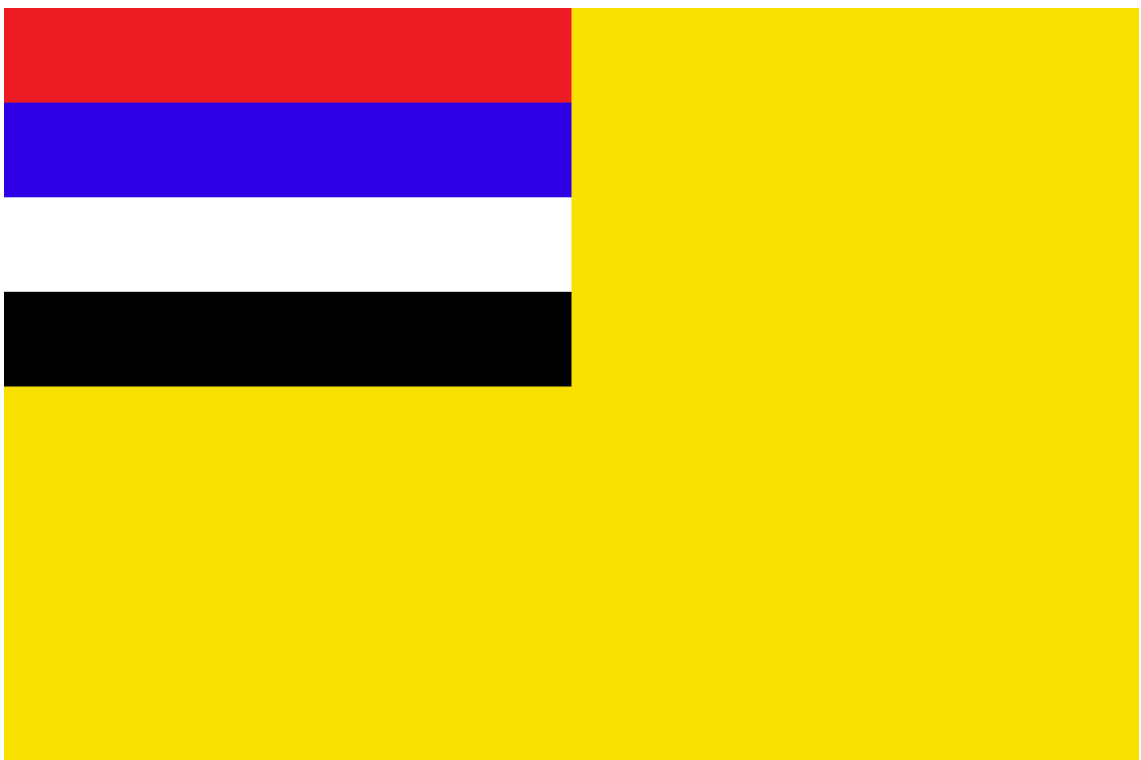
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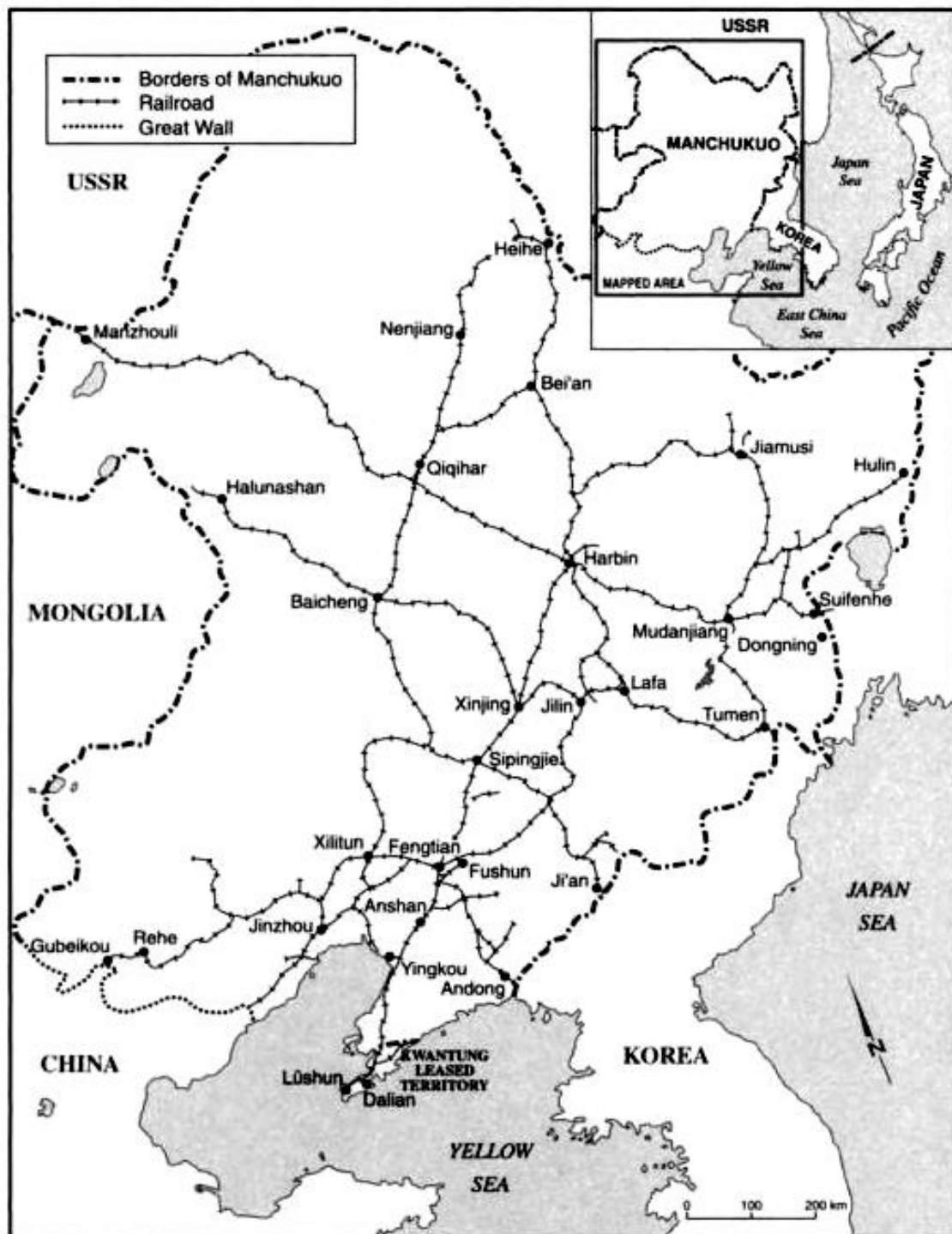
Appendixes

A. The flag of Manchukuo



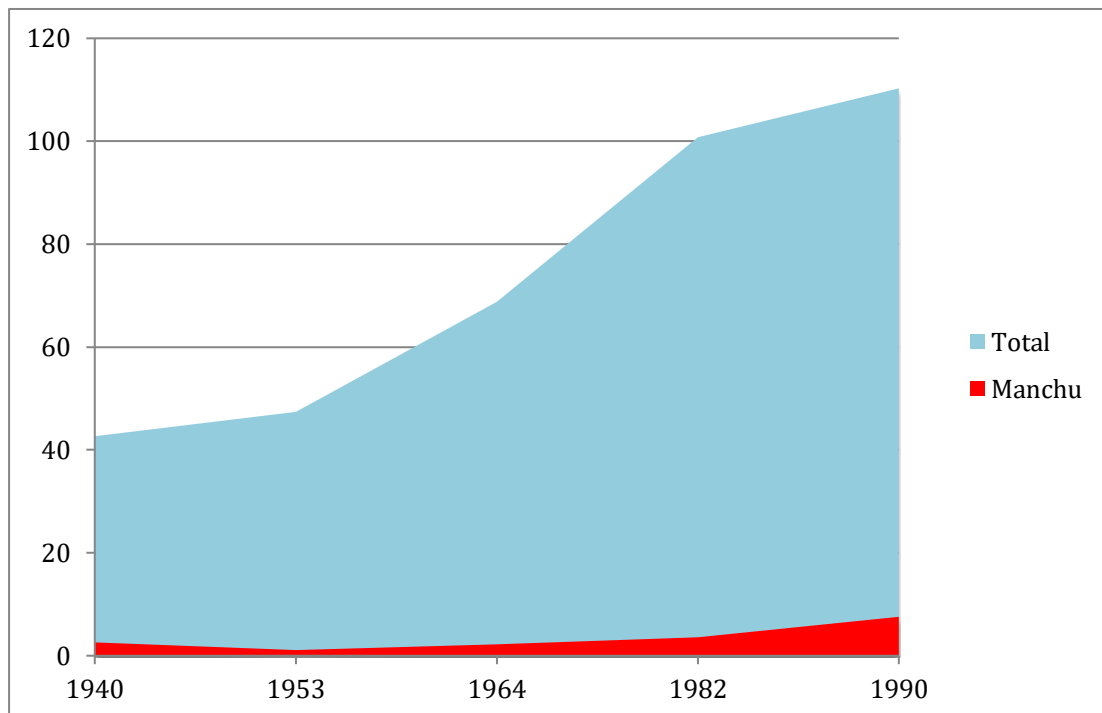
The colours on the map symbolize the five ethnicities of Manchukuo: red - Japanese, blue - Han Chinese, white - Mongols, black - Koreans and yellow - Manchus.

B. The map of Manchukuo, circa 1944.



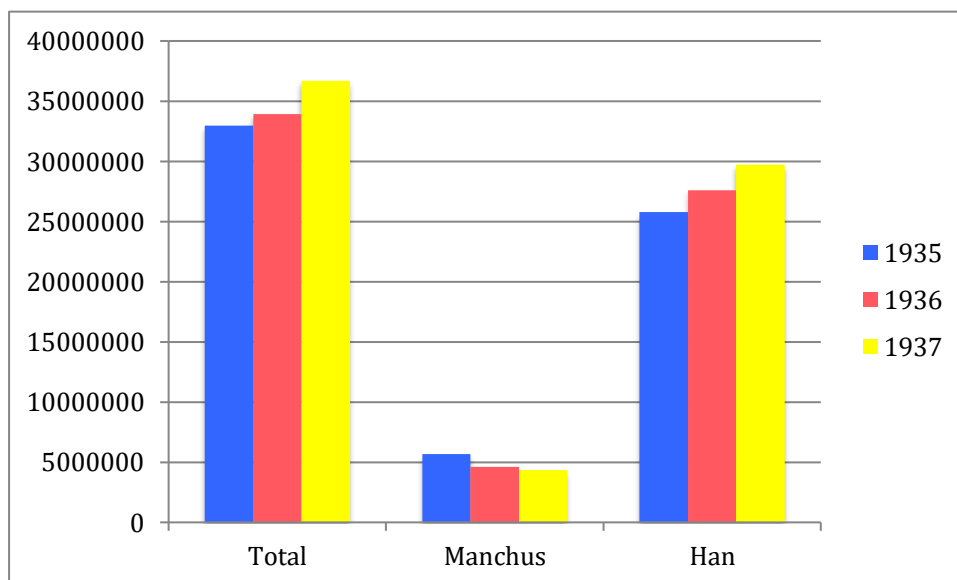
Source: Young, 1998, p. xiv.

C. Population of Manchuria and Northeastern Mongolia: Total Population and Manchu Population in Millions.



Source: Scharping, 1998, p. 25.

D. Population of the Manchus and Han in Manchukuo (1935-1937).



Source: Shao, 2011, p. 310. Original source: Manshu nenkan (1935-1937).